

AN
AMERICAN'S
LONDON



LOUISE CLOSSER HALE



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THE
LITTLE TOWN CLUB



A DAY FOR TOIL · AN HOUR
FOR SPORT · BUT FOR A
FRIEND · LIFE IS TOO SHORT

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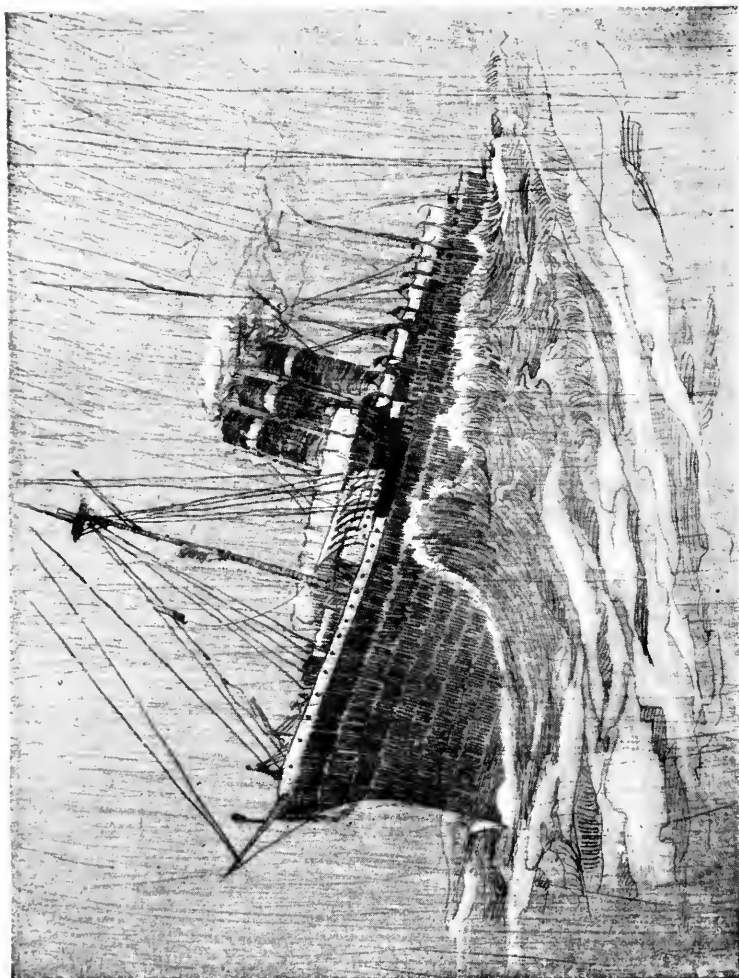


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By LOUISE CLOSSER HALE



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HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK AND LONDON - MCMXX

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Copyright, 1920, by Harper & Brothers
Printed in the United States of America
Published September, 1920

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Chapter I

NEW YORK.

“BUT I love him!”

This is no way to begin a travel book; a traveling to England and a staying there in the cold of their adored spring. Yet it is this cry which is driving me away from all the comforts of a country to one that is supposed to be suffering from the lack of them.

It is not *my* loving him that sends me off on combing January seas; frankly, if I were in love with “him,” whatever him he may be, I should not go away at all. I might pretend that I would, and advise others to do so, but when the time came I should hang around his club door, hoping for one more look at him. Oh, I know us!

Still—in the words of the English, whose shores I am about to visit—I am “fed up” with Cora’s complaint. A girl with a name as sophisticated as hers ought to be able to take care of herself, and not get so deeply into the mire of love that she has to drop in every morning after my breakfast, and sometimes before breakfast (and axioms come hard before coffee), to ask me for a thought to hold on to that she might get through the day.

I always give her a thought. I tell her, for instance, that a man who would ogle a strange

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woman over his fiancée's shoulder in a restaurant would cause her worse misery after she married him; that discovering him in these tricks now is a pure gift from—I said *Venus*, for Cora thinks she is a pagan, although a member of the Baptist Church.

"How fortunate that you are able to read him aright before it is too late," I console.

"Unghuh!" sniffs Cora.

"Now you know his base self, and when you find that a man is base his fascination must sooner or later become a poor, mean thing."

"That's right," gulps the advised.

"Then go through the day," I said, "with a singing of thanksgiving in your heart that soon you will be out of bondage to him."

It is always at the end of such thoughts for the day which I offer Cora that she pipes up with:

"But I love him!"

On this especial morning in January I was about to turn on her and shout out that I was sick of love—hers and everybody else's—that a woman of forty standing with reluctant feet which pointed toward fifty had found out ways to keep her interested other than listening for the door-bell, telephone, letter-carrier, and all such modern means which pleasantly torture us in the absence of the loved but distrusted one. This speech, if fiercely delivered, would probably break our friendship and I could then go happily out into the highways and byways of life, where, of course, I would find no evidence of hymeneal pursuits.

It is as well, perhaps, that the telephone-bell rang before I had an opportunity of cutting the Gordian knot following upon Cora's, "But I love him." She is not entirely a fool, and she might have asked why

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I waited until I was my present age to hand out this sort of stuff—she is a slangy girl—why I had not preached this in my youth instead of taking up at fifteen with a very young man whom I so adored that I walked home from parties with my knees bent—that he could the more comfortably keep his arm in a horizontal position around my waist.

This would have been embarrassing, for I would have had no adequate reply beyond untruthfully regretting that wisdom had not come to me earlier in life—at which Cora would have sniffed.

However, Clotho, Atropos, Lachesis, or whichever of the Three Fates had my case in charge, rang the telephone-bell, and as we were in my room Cora did not plunge for the receiver.

The message was the answer to my prayer for surcease from love—snappy over the wire—one, two, three, four, five words: "Want to go to London?" vibrated at me.

I could then and there have put down the receiver and said to Cora, "I am offered a job by a theatrical manager to go to London to play," and if she had asked why it mightn't have been a publisher sending me across to do a book I would have replied that a publisher, or his representative, took infinite leisure over such arrangements. He enjoys (appears to enjoy) the preliminaries, and probably charges them to the firm. After an exchange of courtesies he would have suggested that if I had any time for tea, or if not tea, for lunch at the Brevoort, it would be very pleasant, as he hadn't seen me for a long time. If the firm was very business-like he might end up with some such definite offer as, "Are you fond of trans-atlantic travel in January?"

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My reply over the telephone was not that of the Complete Actress, who would immediately have responded, "Yes," and then regretted that she had not shown more indifference with a view to raising her salary. My life had become tinged with a writer's reserve, or at least with a reserve of one who tries to write and who, so far as the printed word measures a writer, has succeeded beyond her own wildest expectations. I never see a book of mine without wondering how ever I could have managed it! Still, playing in London would mean an escape from the Coras of life, and I admitted that I should like to talk it over. And at this there was no intimation of food to be offered me at any time. I was just to come over to the office immediately and "walk right through." They mean business when you "walk right through."

Business for me, but not for those anxious ones gathered in the waiting-room through whom you walk—over whom you walk—your entrance into the inner office meaning the exit of all those of your type who stand without the gate.

"Many are called, but few are chosen," cried one of my shabby contemporaries. She nodded cheerfully, but I knew the bitterness of her cup. I have tasted of it myself.

The sight of those men and women—waiting—waiting—never ceases to appal me. For years I was one of those who gather in the outer offices, and when I am an older woman I may be one of those again. "Learn a trade!" I want to cry to those waiting women. "Sew, tat, cook, write bad stories, but develop some other means of making money, however slight. Don't go through life feeling that your

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bread and butter depends solely upon the favor of the theatrical office-boy."

But they will not learn a trade, and they furbish up their finery and each morning make the weary round of managerial offices. We of the theater know the tragedy of Broadway. I wonder the visitor to New York can find a charm in that wide, sparkling street. Must they not hear the footfalls of those many thousands on the treadmill—does not the weight of heavy hearts unconsciously make sight-seeing a burden? It doesn't seem so. The buses for the strangers trundle their freight, the barker calls through the megaphone, "This is the Rialto where the actresses walk up and down." The visitors laugh—and stare at us in search of work.

When I had "walked right through" I was in another office—not yet the "holy of holies," but one full of those who had also been invited to share my privilege or who, with more courage than the other waiting ones, had pushed their way in and were keeping their eye on the closed door where undoubtedly sat some splendid god. Typists were rattling madly on their machines, the office-boy (with two sets of manners, one for the outer and one for the inner rooms) ran about accomplishing nothing; various attachés of different theaters tore around in the squirrel-cage, and the whole effect of "big business" served to reduce the timid artist to an insignificant creature which the manager could do entirely without.

Indeed, if the sensitive player does not stop to analyze this senseless confusion, he begins to feel that not only can they do without him, but without all artists—that plays can be freely acted by the managers, the stenographers, and the bill-posters, and

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unless they cut their salaries immediately this new order of things will be put through. For these moments before the Zero Hour it may be well to bear in mind that the playhouse would go on if the actor wrote his own plays, sold his own tickets, beat his own drum, painted his own scenery, and rang his curtain up and down himself. Every element that goes to make up a production can be dispensed with except the actor himself. And he would not be without an audience, for, while all the appendages of the present-day performance were in the earliest periods of history entirely lacking, the mimic art was—somehow or other—expressed to a public seeking this form of diversion.

I wondered—to give myself courage, no doubt—how long certain theatrical firms, who are looked upon by the little unbusiness-like people with whom they traffic as marvels of astuteness, would last if competing in Wall Street against the able minds of those large, quiet, courteous offices. I maintain they would find themselves entangled in the clauses of the first contract drawn up by the Wall Street gentlemen, caught by little cunning traps such as they had never thought to set for the simple-minded player. Since they do business largely with men and women who couldn't learn Double Entry in a lifetime, they are acknowledged by us to be masters of high finance. No one has found them out—but me—and if they read this I am lost! Yet they will not read it—there is no possibility of a play in this rambling discussion upon English life from which I seem at present far removed.

Once beyond the door where the god sits the amenities of life are resumed. Hands are shaken, a

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chair is offered, a baby photograph is displayed, solicitude on my part is shown for the welfare of wives. He is not a god at all, but a very decent sort of a fellow, and I wonder why I was making incendiary speeches against the whole régime a few moments ago. Managerial charm is creeping over me. Moreover, as one becomes a part of that management, and about to play under it, one becomes partizan to their cause.

I hope I am going to be strong when "Now, as to salary," begins. But I feel I am not going to be—that it would not be pally to ask for too much. We are now pals. Besides, I want to go to London. That is the worst of the actor. What he wants to do is always overcoming what he ought to do, and he grows so bored with business technicalities that he will sign anything. It was after I had shaken hands again and gone out that the arguments I should have advanced came limping up like a delayed relief party: the cost of high living, the income tax, the cold of English theaters, and, perhaps, the loneliness.

I returned to the little room in my club and looked about me. Well, he had said one thing truly, and gently, "You have nothing now to keep you over here." No, nothing to keep me over here or over there, nor the necessity of anything in life but a branch to perch upon. "*Sur la Branche*" indeed. In a passion of abnegation which has brought me more pleasure than discomfort, my home is let to strangers while I have worked for the war. They are kind strangers who speak of the happy spirits which seem to penetrate the rooms. Two spirits. Let the gentle wraiths stay on in those sunny rooms, but the body of one must go about the earth for a little

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while longer and find a reason for enduring. Not only a reason, but a joy in enduring. Once when I was young I wrote, "There is nothing sadder than a full moon shining upon a spinster." That was wrong: one must learn to love the moon for its own beauty, not for the young man it is shining upon. I expect some spinsters have found that out, but I am sure they had to work for it.

Still, when once grasped, the moon will not go back on us—which the young man is apt to do at any moment. Cora's orbit this month will be very pale and largely eclipsed by her woe. She will find some, later, beautifully soft and mellow, and again they will fail her because "he" is not there. But there is one thing I am certain of: my man must be in the moon—no nearer—for real complacency. That attribute is not for the young, but I find it an easy word, like old slippers when we come home from the dance. I claim it for the woman of forty—we have got to have something all our own!

My name was cabled to England to see if the war-time powers approved of it, and Britain roared no protest. Yet, ere I went down to that grim finality, the Passport Building, I found my feet straying automatically to the office of my War Relief. Strange, how in eighteen months a sense of obligation greater than any mere necessity of earning your living comes to one! In my small partitioned office I gazed reflectively at the desk-chair in which I had so often writhed with uncertainty. Fear for my imperfect judgment! Fear for improper administration of the offerings of others! Fear that I could not appear with dignity in meeting my appointments for the day! Trying to inject into my work a love for it sufficient

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to make up for my shortcomings; trying, above all things, to keep in mind the men for whom we were working that we might not swamp their dear interests in proud executive accomplishment.

Invention during this period had left me. Only lame stories came from my pen in those few leisure hours I had for writing. The wolf, having no door of mine to howl outside of, followed me in the streets snapping at my heels. Yet I could not lay down my unremunerative occupation had not this departure been encouraged, insisted upon by those with whom I worked. The fingers of war had clutched me by the throat and I had grown accustomed to them. I found in them a sustaining force, and some other than myself must loosen their fierce grip.

Chapter II

NEW YORK.

I HAD begun to get my digestion out of order with positively my last farewell dinner before my passport came.

It is hard to tell why you feel distinctly embarrassed when the usual ten days have elapsed and this certificate of a decent life has not arrived. You put on a jesting air when your friends question you and tell them, "You don't want it generally known, but you're a German." Away down in your heart you are wondering if the government has found out anything about you, or your family, that you didn't know yourself—or any mild escapade that you *had* known, but had never told a soul. You cut across the street to avoid members of the company who have already received their little green books. They have a smug, settled look which is irritating. You stare at boots in a window, wavering in your intention to buy an extra pair for England. Some one has sent you a steamer-rug, when you get home, and its stern, rectangular plaids are looking you squarely in the face. "Do I return to Scotland or do I not?" it asks. Toward the end the management becomes anxious, calling up daily to ask for news. There is no evasion about a passport. You either have it or haven't it. It would be the only lie you would be sure to be caught in.

"Funny!" grumbled the manager over the 'phone.

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"All of those with foreign blood got theirs immediately."

"Glad to get them out of the country," I replied, trying to be jaunty. "They want to keep *me!*"

"Yah!" He hung up. He didn't seem to care whether he kept me or not. I was wanting most awfully to go to London.

I had my passport by late evening. Goaded by the managerial "Yah," I called up Washington on the long-distance and flung myself upon the mercies of a delightful creature whom I would deem to be delightful even had he refused to assist me. There was no reason why he should put on his military cap and go over to the Passport Office "for such a worm as I." There was no reason why he should feel kindly toward me. A crowd had laughed at him and I had occasioned it. A fortnight before he had come up from Washington to a private showing of a moving picture in one of those down-town buildings where little projecting-rooms, all along in a row, are rented for such occasions. I nabbed him as he came along the public hall, for in my pride over my own War Relief feature-film, it never occurred to me that he could come a distance to see any other. The picture was being run and he stoopingly made his way through the darkness to a front seat. Our story unreeled itself. Our greatest American stage director appeared upon the screen. His priest-like mien and recognized white collar received a fine burst of applause. Upon the white sheet he was directing a drama within a drama.

The major peered at me through the blackness. His voice traveled. "Are these the Armenian atrocities?" he timidly asked.

Yet, even after that, over a clear wire came the

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answer from him that my passport had been snowed under and was now shoveled out and on its registered, controlled way. At the instigation of my management, now thoroughly humbled, I was then besought to ask of him a search for the remaining reluctant permit of the company. And this was accomplished. One would think that a man entering upon official life would put a cheerful sign over his door, "I am without friends," and pursue his duties with comparative ease. Yet I notice that it is the busiest men who are most importuned and who find time—make time—for kindnesses. A member of the Morgan firm will write a letter of recommendation for an eighteen-dollar-a-week stenographer, but such a request will lie unnoticed on the desk of a woman who has no pursuit but that of getting through the day.

Sometimes she neither writes nor reads. Recently in a fashionable hotel I saw two well-clad women renew an old friendship. "I wrote you three weeks ago," reproached one.

"Oh my goodness! Did you? I open my letters only about once a month," the other actually explained.

The friendship was not getting along very well when I left them.

Now the passport is here, the British consul has approved it and I have sat in a row with soiled Greeks at the Custom House, waiting for my dock-pass. And all of a sudden I don't want to go to London!

Why must one seek strange adventures in ill-heated lands when one can sit by the steam-radiator and reflect comfortably upon more enlivening experiences that have passed! What is memory for if not to spare us the physical effort of new exploits?

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Why the mind's eye if not to fill it with past visions? Countless pleasant happenings can be recalled; there was the season you made the hit in that light comedy—it was a splendid year—your clothes fitted you, and you always just caught a car and never just missed them. It was spring, too. There was that young man ('way, 'way back, of course) who wanted to die for you—but was persuaded not to. There was the one you reformed, and who never drinks heavily even to this day without speaking freely to everybody on the street of your goodness. There was the year you sold everything you wrote. And could not lunch without magazine editors, because you had enough work, anyway! For me there were many lands already visited to reflect upon: glittering Tunis, Taormina faint with beauty, soft Tuscany, the Tyrol and its good coffee, grim Spain, the white roads of France, the singing birds of the Old Dominion, the drooping elms of New England, the vast quiet of the Grand Cañon.

I settled down in my chair—deep down for deeper thought. Why had I not appreciated before this great heritage! When it seemed for a time that my life was dismembered I had figured myself poor in any kind of goods from which one could derive profit. It had come to me as curious that more had not been translated from those wide travels into a definite moneyed crystallization. With us two we saw a country and paid for the seeing. I had thought from time to time we paid a great deal for all we saw. I had been left without the protection which money can buy, and once or twice in my enforced elimination of the few luxuries which myself and one other had shared, I felt unshielded from the world.

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Now, in my small rented room, philosophizing from the depths of my chair, I could have clapped my hands with joy at my discovery. I was the richest of women. Provision had been made by these happy wanderings for a life of luxury for my inner self. I would never be poor or lonesome—nor would the mental retina be empty of pictures. It was the greatest of all dowering. The daily meals for the physical creature were the slight instances of life which I knew could always be managed. I breathed happily. I would not go to London. I would stay at home and rest. And begin reflecting to-night—upon that jaunt in the Pyrénées, perhaps. Then to-morrow night—

The sudden bounding into mechanical life of many engines in the street below brought me to a realization of other motor-cars than a small ghost roadster which wound around far mountains. I arose and looked down upon the oblong, shining limousine-tops—new roof-trees for the traveling rich. Far up the street two of the theaters had flashed the electric signal to make ready; the engines labored and coughed, for the night was cold; some sank into rest again. The whirl of the self-starters, with that irritating suggestion of chance response, brought hoots of derision from the chauffeurs. The cars in action wheeled out and ahead of those so retarded.

Husky-voiced, shabby men were now running along the pavement and in and out among the cars, calling their numbers in the hope of a chance quarter. It was a method of livelihood pursued only from custom. The figures shone out brightly from the electric carriage-call over the theater. One wretch clung to the running-board of a great machine. "Get down, you coke fiend!" yelled the driver. The wretch stepped

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down. He was too thoroughly a victim of cocaine even to curse.

I myself was contemptuous of him. He was of those who shrugged off realities to live the more easily among dreams. My brain made a little zig-zag—quite tangible—I could have drawn its course with a pencil. He lived among dreams—a cowardly way of getting out, wasn't it, then, this dear dreaming? His physical life, starved for beauty, made an effort to create images of loveliness—we were not unlike.

There was a knock at the door and one of those women I love came in. Why do we love one friend more than another? This one was not beautiful and few thought her clever. She read but little. She was not industrious and slept late always. I think I love her because she is good, and her values of life are incomparable—and she acts beautifully. I love her because we were together when war was declared and when the armistice was signed, and were together over the death-bed of a friend. There was something about her those three times as though her soul had come out where her face generally was and her rugged features were all effaced. For she was very shiny and beautiful. Then, again, she leads a sedate life, as though she prefers it, but she once cried: "Is there no man in this world who can care for me? I don't ask anything honorable of him—just that he will care for me!" But she never spoke like that again, and went on living dully, her clear understanding not impaired by rancor. Not hard on others who were loved. Perhaps these are some of the reasons why I care so much for her. Small reason I had to care for her that night if I was to pursue a cocainized future! You had a way of telling her things—possibly because

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she didn't come back at you with things of her own to tell. I unfolded my beautiful plan for future diversion on an earth that must be lonely.

She sat down firmly in a chair with her hands on her knees—not graceful at all—and spoke squarely at me:

“Something like a cow ruminating as it chews its cud.”

“A cow?”

“Except that you can't count on the cud, or the fields in which to chew.”

“There are pastures,” with dignity, from me.

“Whose?”

“My friends have many acres.”

“I wasn't brought up in metaphor. I suppose you mean flats, houses, or country places?”

“Well—yes.”

“You'll be an acquisition to a dinner-party.” She was undoubtedly sneering at me.

“Why not? I can share my experiences.”

She yawned. “I know them—the ‘has-beens.’ ‘When I was in Calcutta—the moonlight at Riverside with the golden fruit—once I saw Vesuvius in eruption—’ Great Scott!”

I spoke. “But don't you see my life is finished?”

Her laugh in a way was gratifying. “Do you remember that American woman in France who felt her life was over, and that she must give way for the younger generation for there was no more room for her in God's plan? So she moved to a little house in the Marne Valley. That was in July, 1914. Then the troops began coming through and she found in her enormous activities that God had just begun with her—the book publishers had just begun with her,

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too, incidentally. Small chance she has these days to ruminate, although cud is in plenty for her now and she doesn't have to borrow a pasture to chew in, either!"

The last motor went honking up the street, the thumping of my steam pipe prefaced its retirement. The night outside grew darker, for the illuminated signs were being flipped off by unseen hands, but the looms of the city, weaving the destiny of those four millions, went on. We never stop growing, never stop growing, never stop growing—old! I reflected.

She moved to the window—a step in my congested quarters. "Look at this black world. By some terrible privilege you and I were dumped down on earth in these awful times. They are not over yet; sometimes I get discouraged and think they have just begun. I believed when peace was virtually declared that immediately everything would shake down and we'd be comfortable once more—"

"I know," I interrupted. "I even learned a verse to recite at parties; it is all about rest after peace. It runs: 'Oh, days of ease; oh, honeyed nights of sleep!'"

"'Honeyed nights of sleep!' Good God! I am worrying over that League of Nations so I can't close my eyes. Aren't they going to take in Russia?"

"Yes; aren't they?" I echoed, glad of the diversion from being scolded.

But she returned to her *mouton* and considered my exclamation as a point for herself. "Now, you see! Can you imagine two women at the witching hour of midnight talking of such a subject—having such a subject to talk *about*—two decades back? Thank the Lord you weren't forty years of age sixty years ago with nothing to do for amusement but jump through

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your hoop-skirts! Yet in the midst of all this you want to borrow a cow-lot to lie down in and think about that grape-vine over the inn door at Poitiers."

"I'm awfully tired," I muttered, feeling sorry for myself.

She was all for me immediately. "Of course you are, but you are not old enough to stop. Nobody can stop now. There are too many things to be worked out. Here we are playing with a cut-up puzzle and but half the picture made."

"I'm not a world power. I can't meddle with their blamed jig-saw mess," I defended.

"I don't know what you are, and I don't know what I am, but I know every one of us must try our darnedest to finish the design. I don't suppose there is even a little three-cornered piece that it is up to you as an individual to fit in. It will be the whole world straining—a concerted effort—which will complete the picture." Her deep voice trembled, again something came out through her eyes, and she had not a face—just a starry look.

"I will go to London, of course," I assured her, feeling important and belonging to the Peace Conference. "Besides, I have got my living to make."

"That's the most sensible thing you've said. Buy your own sunny pasture, and when you're an old lady—"

"Old cow," I amended.

"No, darling, just when you're old, really old, review your sweet early dreams through the quiet day. But this is not the time for going over the past, L——, much as we might like to."

So I leaned over and put a label on my hat-box—full of shoes—and my friend snapped down some-

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thing on the desk behind me which I feared I recognized.

"You're not going to set the world afire with your discoveries in London. I don't imagine that for a moment, but you might solve one question that would help one woman to keep one hired girl one week. My friends write me it can't be done."

She pushed my typewriter toward me insinuatingly.

I rather caught at the idea. "And at the same time," I chattered out, "by this study of social conditions I can avoid the Cora complaint."

It was after the elevator had clanked its door that it occurred to me I had heard her laughing in the hall!

Chapter III

ON THE BOAT.

IF you go on board you cannot return," a voice had croaked at the gangway. Extraordinary, this arbitrary disposition of a woman's existence during the period between armistice and peace! A whole row of gentlemen on the safe side of a neat white picket-fence had already learned my age and my occupation. They had looked over my pocket-book, and generously given me clean bills for dirty ones.

"'S' all you got?" one had even probed.

"'S' all," I answered, taking a fierce joy in the consciousness of a safety-pocket around my waist full of very dirty money.

"'J' want t' see yer friends onc't more?" pursued Cerberus, evidently having dealt with women before.

"Nope," I answered, sturdily. My friends had been strictly forbidden to come near the boat. He snapped the dock-pass among others belonging to voyagers who had been equally cold to prolonged farewells, and I made my way for the twenty-third time in my life toward my twenty-third cabin. To be honest, I should say my forty-fifth cabin—two for each voyage—the forty-sixth one to be mine as soon as the chief steward could be approached. The hour before sailing was no time to traffic with that digni-

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tary. Yet others were already in his office; a woman was popping her eyes at him like the flicking of fingers into his face—in the words of the elocutionist, she was using force, not stress. “Come down and see it yourself. Come down,” she commanded.

They went below and I appeared upon the upper deck just in time to view all my cabin luggage, which was swaying in a great net, disappearing into the hold—disappearing for the rest of the voyage. Tooth-brush, candy, diary, hair-tonic, evening dress for the last night, all, all going down. I am not a person of authority, but I have roared through melodramas with some success.

“Stop!” rang out upon the noisy air.

The bell of the dummy-engine tinkled and the net swayed uncertainly above the pit. “Lower that to the deck,” I commanded, in pure desperation.

The hypnotized stevedore seized and swung it from the maw of the open hatch and landed it onto the sweet, safe floor.

“What the”—(a lot of words)—“yer doin’?” called the boatswain.

“Lady tella me,” explained the dock-hand, indicating my old gray head.

By this time I had a bill out and was flapping it at him from above. No Barbara Frietchie ever waved a country's flag more appealingly. “My cabin luggage!” I shouted. “Some fool mixed it up— Why, it's all *labeled!*” I was contracting a crowd, but audiences are encouraged in my life. The Italian, stimulated by the evidences of my wealth, opened the net. Others eager to share with him in doing good—and the bill—hastened to divide the spoils, and up they came from the lower deck to the cabin, and I lay down

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in exhaustion on my bunk—my typewriter in my arms.

* * * * *

Our first rehearsal was held in the state-room of the director fifteen minutes after we were under way. We had been assured by the management, left comfortably behind in New York, that we could do all our rehearsing on the boat and be ready to burst into a London production upon landing. They argued that it will be pleasanter than rehearsing on dry land before leaving, as we don't have to take subways and buses and—if late—taxicabs in order to meet every day. In other words, the manuscript wasn't ready.

The idea of plunging into work before we had dropped the pilot probably originated from the brain of the director himself. We could get some idea of what we were going to do, and, afterward, when we were confined to our room with horrible seasickness, we could cheerily commit our lines. So we sat huddled together, all with an ache in our hearts, no doubt, and mad to get up and see our majestic leave-taking down the harbor of our city; yet all soberly intent on our job.

After a while there was a slackening of the engines, and a nervous one who had never been to sea before exclaimed that we were stopping. He looked relieved—I believe he thought we were going back. The drama of the play wavered. We were such a lonesome little company of Americans, each had a small drama in his life that was probably quite as good as any plot ever given to the public. Being Americans, they were purely domestic in character, having to do with the wife, or a house in the country not yet paid for,

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or babies left behind. And dropping the pilot was very definite. Still there was the play!

"Go on," prodded the director. "You pick him up sharply there, Mr. B——, but always the gentleman, of course."

The rehearsal continued.

That night in my cabin I disposed my effects with a view to lost motions should seasickness come again to visit me. We have long been strangers, but the seasoned voyager never boasts of his imperviousness. Personally, I have withstood the stormiest trips to be violently ill in a row-boat bobbing around Capri. Like love, it comes when least expected, and, as far as I am concerned, like love it is about as welcome.

Musing on this brought Cora to my mind, upon whom I had rained a number of farewell gifts as though to atone for my desertion of her. She was continually roused from her heavy-hearted, at least, heavy slumbers during the last night of packing by articles hurled against her door, more in anger than in sorrow. An electric iron thudded, a traveling-lamp crashed, cretonne curtains flopped, and just before I clambered into the automobile *en route* to the dock in the gray of the morning she received my second steamer-rug.

"Why are you so good to me?" she had cried, in a passion of teary gratitude. I might have told her—but I didn't—I couldn't get the dog-gone things in the trunks.

The friend I love had been with me through the earlier part of the night, and if she reached her hotel without being blackjacked it was not for lack of parcels, tempting, at least, in their size. She has one of those charming qualities of the darky: a horror of

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seeing anything thrown away. She spent the time stooped over my waste-basket, picking out the desperately discarded. She went home with one balsam pillow, three-quarters of a pound of coffee, one corset with the whalebone removed, half a tin of powdered milk, one eye-cup, ten cents' worth of granulated sugar (loose), and a package of New Year's cards unfortunately defaced by the senders scrawling their various names across them. All of these tokens of a misspent life were tied together with Christmas ribbons of various lengths and color. I am not ungenerous by nature, but as I realized the capaciousness of my forty-sixth cabin I began to regret my prodigality. This may have been occasioned by a chance conversation at dinner the first night out. The Englishwomen were carrying over sugars, woolens, rubbers, glass tumblers, linen tea-towels, and all sorts of food-stuffs up to seventy-nine pounds, which is the limit for each individual. After seventy-nine pounds you become a wholesale lady, liable to duty.

I must learn more of this. As a student of social economics I suppose I must be wide-awake. I hate to be wide-awake and to improve my mind. I do not know whether I have changed or whether the fault is with old *tempora* and *mores*, but with my first crossings I was terrified that I should not get acquainted with every one on the boat—and now I am terrified that I may get acquainted with too many. I have found that boat friendships are, as a rule, ephemeral. We are not drawn together—we are dashed together. Cocktails in the smoking-room, boredom in the lounge, makes us talk to one another. A neighborliness with the deck-chairs around you is natural, and the results are often happy. You may

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even remember whose cards are whose after you have been ashore a week.

But at the tables you *must* be friends. An American has indeed bridged the gulf that separates us from the Continent and continental manners when he can come to his dinner on the first night out and bow to the table. It is easier for us to sit down and nibble away at bread, staring miserably into nothingness, than it is for us to enter into an immediate casual conversation with the neighbor at our elbow. After the second or third day we become very brash—not to say intimate—and want to “open wine” for every one. It is harder for us to stick to a happy medium than the English, who are, one might say, in abundance on this boat. They’ll talk on the first day and they’ll talk on the last, but there will be no lavish manifestation of friendship. Yet, if the spark should develop with the Englishman, it will not be a quick-dying flame—you’ll get a Christmas card for the rest of your life, anyway. I received them all through the war from a friend in London—cards specially designed for the times. I remember one humorless offering singing, “Heigh-ho, the green holly,” with a picture of a Zeppelin sailing over St. Paul’s. Brave, inscrutable people.

Still, there is good talk on this boat, if one cares to listen, and not spoil the excellence of the thought by becoming part of it. Big men are going over on big missions. Their cabins are on the same deck as mine; secretaries go in and out of their rooms, two or more men with each dignitary. Yet at night, when the boots are put out, the millionaires are represented only by a single shabby pair. No nonsense about clothes for *them*.

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In glittering contrast is a table of British officers near ours in the dining-saloon. They wear their blue dress uniforms at night, and sometimes they put on mufti, which our men would not be permitted. Although of different regiments the highest of rank seems to be in a position to criticize any lack of decorum among them. He is a young Irish colonel with a purely English accent. He is a bit over twenty, beginning as a subaltern and moving forward in a single battle as one by one his superior officers were shot down. I wanted to talk to him of these things, but, their mission accomplished in America, they are so eagerly out for fun I could not speak of that field of dead friends. Only once, after he had nervously sought out a captain to advise him, for the honor of his country, to do his spooning in private, did he speak of the burden of grave responsibility. How, on that day when he had taken command he had feared he had not done the right thing, for he had ordered his men to retreat, and of his boyish relief when, later, he had been upheld in his action by the high command. "I can tell anybody to do anything after that," he completed.

One thing I have already learned—which is rather a relief to me—I will not find out by asking. I must get what knowledge will be granted me in England by absorption and, possibly, by experience. Just what I am to experience I don't know, and little trickles of interest are beginning to creep through my frame like sap in the trees when it's spring again. I am glad we are coming over with the New Year, when even the oldest trees feel the stir of life.

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Most of the day has been spent with the director at the long table of the lower companionway where the Y. M. C. A. secretaries bring out their little typewriters and go through their official business. My typewriter was also in use, as I laboriously made out the lists for the property-man, the scene plots, and the electrician's orders for lighting our play. We even typed in my blackest capitals the order for taking our "bows"—the order of our curtain-calls at the end of each act. These are to be fastened to the door-frames outside of each entrance to the scene so that the players may consult it when the dread first night arrives, and may group themselves on the stage without confusion.

My toes curled up in terror as I prepared for the calls that might never come, and I insanely wrote out my name on the wrong shift-key for the call I am to take if I get out alone. "Fourth Curtain: Mrs. 038834." What if they gave me "the bird" when I once got out there, *if* I once got out there! I have heard these English audiences "boo." It drifts down from the gallery like a cry of some bird of ill-omen. Yet we of the theater must prepare for this mimic advance. We can but retreat if the enemy is too strong for us.

I stopped typing after I had taken my inglorious mental curtain-call to look at the director appealingly. "Do I know my lines?" I said.

"Certainly you know them," he assured me.

I had asked him this a number of times before, and it would probably be the last thing I would ask him before I stepped upon the stage.

One of the secretaries, overhearing me, laughed with a good deal of understanding. "We have to get

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an assurance from some higher power than ourselves now and then, don't we?" he said.

"That's one of the advantages of present-day mental science," some one else spoke up. The stewards had brought in the tea, and work had momentarily ceased.

"Yes, this invoking a strength which doesn't seem to be ours is just a newer fashion for importuning God to help us," the first man answered.

"Pershing isn't ashamed to ask for help in the old-fashioned way," a military man broke in from across the table. "One of his aides said to him the first day of the attack on the Argonne, 'General, I feel like praying.' But Pershing answered, 'I have been.'"

"Well, I don't know what you call it," I admitted, "but if I were on dry land now, I'd be paying a mental scientist two dollars a treatment just to have him tell me I know my lines."

"And do you?"

"Yes, if he tells me so."

"What if you haven't studied them?"

"Oh, they're very sensible," I explained. "One 'healer' gave me a good thought before the *première* of the play. He asked me if I had committed my words carefully, and I replied that I had, but that I was awfully fearful. 'If you've committed them, they're inside of you for the rest of your existence. Whenever you grow nervous over approaching lines that you feel you don't know, open your mouth wide—they'll come out!'"

One of the number said if he came the first night and found me standing silently with my mouth open he would remain perfectly at ease, but the littlest one of our company came over to our table for more tea and sturdily upheld me. I don't know what cult she

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belongs to, but she always makes me feel that everything is going to be all right, and if I paid her two dollars she would probably do me as much good as a professional "cheerer-up"—it's the fee which gives an importance to the suggestion promulgated. Why do we place small value on what we get for nothing?

"It's true, it takes an outsider to help us when we're down and out spiritually and mentally," she said. "We have grown negative and we need a positive, disinterested personality as a sustaining force."

"That's hypnotism," the Y secretary contended.

I was about to attack him, but the littlest one went on, thoughtfully: "I don't care what it is, but it gets you through a performance. A lot more professionals go to be encouraged than we have any idea of, and my English friends write me that many of the British officers went to—you know—her eyes sought out a Briton—"your big mental scientist over there—Lawson. They asked to be safely directed, and some asked to have their men protected."

"I'd rather trust to military tactics," answered a Briton, stoddily. He was a civilian.

"Well, anyway, they went. The thing's in the air. God in a new guise, perhaps."

I broke in again, refusing to be out of anything which I commenced. I told them of a New York *première* and of my anxiety over a new act which the author had dashed off his typewriter and pitched at us at the last moment, as though we could type it on our brains. I had studied the part "out of my head," as the players say. I felt I could never go through with it, so I hunted up a scientist. He was getting a divorce from his wife, but that had nothing to do

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with the case. He was a sandy-haired man, and I wouldn't trust a sandy-haired man in the heart—but in the head—ah, yes! During the treatment the healer kept leaning forward to put his hand on my brow and repeat, impressively, "When the curtain goes up on that last act you will know your lines."

"And did you?" one of the table asked, because he thought it was the time to ask it—or he may have wanted to talk himself.

"Just listen," I continued. "The star sent for me to run through the lines between the second and this last act—there were three acts—and while I went down to the stage I begged him not to do the scene. If we didn't know the words it would only terrify us the more, for we had to play it, anyway, within four minutes, so there was no time to study. But, being a star, he was obdurate—that's what makes 'em stars—and I tried to rehearse with the orchestra playing a gay little fox-trot, and every one out in front no doubt saying how well 'it' was going. Well, I didn't know one word, not a word, and the director looked at me in horror. I could only hold on to the thought for which I had paid two dollars: 'When the curtain goes up on that last act you will know your lines.' So I told them not to worry, but to ring up. They did. I had to run down a long staircase, shouting out my scene, with the star standing below—" Here I hesitated, with true dramatic instinct.

"I'm the goat—what's the answer?" queried the director.

"I spoke all my lines, I spoke all the star's lines, and told him when to go off the stage, for he was utterly paralyzed with fear. Now what do you think of that?"

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The man reiterated that it was hypnotism, and some said it was worth two dollars. The January seas, trying to get into the party, slapped the boat angrily and slopped over our tea. It broke up the séance. The director had, or thought he had, the last word. "Pure concentration! That's the reason the actor is tired at the end of his performance. His concentration is tremendous. I don't believe in this mental suggestion stuff. Now I just go to the members of the company on a first night and tell them, separately, how good they are going to be. They always play better."

And the director wondered why the ship's company laughed.

* * * * *

A general conversation in the companionway or the lounge has not been the usual thing with us actors, however. We stick together, although we may have few tastes in common beyond that of the theater. A traveling company is brought into contact with men and women of all pursuits, yet we never know them. And what these varied men and women do not understand is that, in America, we do not want to know them. The gulf of the footlights is impassable. We talk across to them—they look at us; if they encourage us over the footlights they increase our salaries. We call them outsiders, yet we know that they are really the architects of our fate.

Now and then on this boat passengers drop down in the deck-chairs either side of me to ask if we don't get tired of saying the same thing night after night. They all ask the same question. And they are mystified when I reply that playing a part is only one-third of the performance. The other two-thirds is the

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audience—the response—and as the audience changes nightly we have always fresh material to work with.

“Still,” answered an army chaplain, doubtfully, “I’d hate to preach the same sermon at every service.”

“If your audience—excuse me, congregation—didn’t have to sit in decorous, frozen silence, but could express their approval as your discourse went on, you might enjoy repeating the same thing—enjoy ‘working for points.’ Some nights you would go well, some nights poorly. If you kept on going poorly, the church would dismiss you. ‘Working for points’ keeps you up to your standard.”

“We’re out for something else besides applause,” he delicately suggested.

“We aren’t. Applause is all we have to measure our success by.”

He probably thinks us a vain people, and no doubt this continuous seeking for approval develops a craving for praise—but if we are not praised we lose our bread and butter. Did any one ever stop to think that of all the arts acting is the only one that cannot be enjoyed alone? A woman may sing for herself, paint with enjoyment, write, or read what she has written, with a consciousness that art is its own consolation. But when the actor is not before an audience his talent is lying fallow.

He may tell you that he stays at home and plays long scenes by himself—but don’t you believe it. Imagine a farceur prancing around a room uttering, “I’m Charley’s Aunt from Brazil, where the nuts come from,” to silent, unresponsive walls. So, dear public, be generous with your applause, or at least let us feel that you are attentive. Don’t buy an orchestra seat just to spread yourself out in. When

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you give your boredom full play the actor grows nervous. He is not holding the audience, and the star in the wings is apt to remark to his stage manager that the poor Thespian has not a compelling personality. His re-engagement for the following season is beginning to fade—"Iris out," as the moving-picture directors say.

To-night, however, I was driven to my forty-sixth cabin shortly after certain others scattered to theirs. It has been a stormy day. At one time the big ship stopped her engines, as much as to say to the waves: "Now have it your own way for a while. The world is tired of battling and so am I." But after a while it picked up courage and plowed its way through rebellious mountains of opposition—as we must do.

Our comedian caused the scattering from the particular corner of the lounge where he was holding forth. He chose to-night to tell me in a clear, ringing voice of the Bowery days of his youth, and of the magnificent competitions among gentlemen of his acquaintance in the eating line. No one was caring much about eating, except the comedian; still, the subject had the fascination of novelty, and his cheery enthusiasm over food was attractive in its whimsicality.

My confrère tells me that it was the custom for matches to be made and great sums of money placed on the man who was judged to be able to eat the most at one sitting. They had eating trainers, who would arrange the contests, and I think the man who had gastronomic limitations paid the food bill.

"It would go like this," the little comedian explained. "One fellah would eat another, and he'd say to him, 'I'll eat you for a thousand dollars a side.'"

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At this point, a lady, her life already tinged by a bilious sweater, hastened out with lips compressed, I assume, by disapproval. But I was feeling reckless. There was a precious sort of man near by wearing a velvet jacket who had annoyed me from the first day. Not that he had spoken to me—oh, nothing like that—but he had referred to us as a troupe. “How much did they eat?” I pursued, my eyes on the esthetic one.

“Well, you know those Coney Island steamers serving a dinner, ‘All you can eat for a dollar’? (I didn’t, but I said I did.) “One fellah, Moskowitz was his name, ate up thirty table d’hôtes—and that wasn’t a bet. He was just taking a little ride to get in condition.”

The velvet jacket twitched, yet remained reading its vellum-bound book, but two Y secretaries went below to get their music.

“Why, it was nothing for those fellahs to ask for all the vegetables in the kitchen when they come into a restaurant. They ate a lot of squash—squash goes down easy.”

The velvet jacket heaved.

“The first match that was ever fixed up, however, between a big man named Barney and this Moskowitz, never got any farther than the opening speech. It was in one of those Dutch restaurants, and thousands of dollars had been placed on both the men. Barney had offered to eat this Pole, and when they do that it’s polite for the one who made the offer to ask his opponent what he wants to start off with. So Barney says to Moskowitz, ‘What will we begin on?’ And do you know what that Pole answered?”

“Something oily, I suppose. Sardines?”

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“Sardines—nothing! ‘Well,’ said Moskowitz, ‘let’s begin with *hams*.’”

The velvet coat disappeared, and I waited long enough to ask what was the horrible death of a man like that. He had passed away but a short time ago of old age. So there is nothing to be derived from this pleasant little sea tale beyond an added force to my earlier statement that actors stick by one another.

As a little band differentiated from the statesmen, the financiers, the army and the navy, consideration is shown us. On the day we were discovered careening around a corner of the dining-room in our efforts to follow the movements of the play, the two private drawing-rooms of the ship were offered us by the well-endowed possessors. Our hostesses sometimes sit in a corner of these salons, no doubt thinking the play dreary, for nothing is so ghastly as a comedy in rehearsal. American women are fine in all walks of life—to my American mind—but there is nothing more splendid than one of gentle breeding. We have a real *grande dame* on the boat, in whose room we rehearsed. The door was by chance left open at one of the “repetitions,” and a—a mineral king with more money than manners stopped in the passage to stare at the animals. The animals, always too quick to resent the outsider, grew restive, and the good lady arose, without apology, closing the door in the face of the leering one. We may have been strange company for her, but we were her guests.

I dined away from my own people one night to sit at the table of a great, wise man who has, quite incidentally, a great fortune wisely made. “Dining with royalty,” one of the English officers put it. I fear that was about the only time the English officers

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noticed me. Lacking an aristocracy in America, the British are not unalive to our class that the moneyed element form. The aristocracy of brains does not seem to figure at all with them in any country, but "Is he very rich?" they will ask when we speak of one of our people, just as they will say, "He is a great swell," of some Briton of good birth—in both cases lightly, as though it didn't make any difference one way or the other.

Still, I am looking forward to a very beautiful England, ranks leveled by a common cause, hearts welded into one by their sweeping losses, money made mean by the utter futility of it as a coin to buy forgetfulness. In spite of the chaos of the world, proud England must be gloriously happy that it is again victorious England. Shall I say—will I be able to say—must be very grateful as well? I don't know.

The last ship's concert has been held. Unlike pre-war days, talent from the second cabin was not levied on, and girls wearing a Christian emblem made up the new entertainers. The Y young women were charming and beautifully behaved—friendly with the men and not too friendly. And all of the contingent are cheerful.

We talk a good deal of "professional cheerfulness" and are inclined to sneer at it. This annoys me. They could just as easily be professionally gloomy—and they probably feel like it often. Even a Pierrot with his smile painted on has a better chance in a crowd than a glowering countenance, no matter how honestly it is his own. And the world is just a crowd which we must make our way through.

An Englishwoman who has spent a good deal of

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her time entertaining the British in France talked to us in the dining-saloon one night. We all liked her, and all cried, and gave her money to go on with her work. I was talking with her afterward as some vague American gentleman slipped a folded-up bill in her hand—only, when she unfolded it, it was a hundred dollars. We ran up the stairs to thank him, but we hadn't a clue, so we came back and both of us cried. I don't want to burden him with my literary efforts, but I hope he will read this one page of this one book to learn how grateful she was.

The entertainer told me that she had always wanted to go into plays instead of confining herself to work on lecture and concert stands. She probably would be awful, as it is her gentle, homely, undecorated self which makes her. With a layer of paint and a lot of players around with whom she must blend herself to give a good performance, she might be swamped. But I couldn't tell her this, and I hope she will go on feeling comfortably, as so many do, that she is a great actress lost to the world.

What arouses me, at the end of this voyage (it is something I did not come over to solve, yet it obtrudes itself through each shipboard day), is the way a most interesting woman like this is left to sit in her deck-chair, quite unattended by the gallants of a ship—or men of any kind for that matter—when every girl with bobbed hair riotously covering a scanty brain has a man on the foot-rest of her chair, and one or two others waiting their turn. This woman—thirty, perhaps—is amusing. She has had wide experiences, she has been hurt—it is in her eyes—therefore she can be tender. She is distinctly feminine, yet she sits down with her trusty fountain-pen and a blank

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diary for companions. Why—to go into it more generally—does the man of the world prefer to gallivant around with a young girl just peeping out on this world, instead of devoting himself to some woman, not so young, but so much of the earth that she could apply—if he asked it—her excellent knowledge of life to being exceedingly agreeable?

(Why should she have to wait to be asked, if she is ready to be agreeable? But there! No use going into that! Keep it for another book—a tome.)

Why isn't the pretty woman just over thirty-five as much in demand as the pretty girl just over eighteen? Of course, if the average man is asked this he will declare he *does* prefer the woman of thirty-five, and you must then weed out his assertions as extraneous matter. I canvassed one novelist on the subject. A man who never has a fancy—certainly not a light one—except that which he puts in books, so I felt that I could get something like the truth from him.

He admitted baldly that he liked 'em young because they didn't know anything, and he could impress 'em, whereas an older woman, although she might apply all her experience of life to her emotion, would be so able to measure his own emotion by those very experiences that he would be "doocid uncomfortable."

The littlest girl of the company, who is the mother of a grown-up young man, said it was all custom. If Adonis had gone after the middle-aged of the goddesses, if Jove had taken even a decent interest in them, or if Paris had dug some woman of forty out of her ancient bed to give her the apple, all the men now would be buying soda-water for old ladies whose

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digestions were already impaired by deep draughts from the Pierian spring. "They're just like sheep," she completed, contemptuously, watching a good-looking officer hanging over a blond miss whose permanent wave was ruling Britannia in strict defiance of the stirring chorus of the British navy.

I shook my head and leaned farther over the boat's rail to watch for the phosphorus in the water which I knew was not there. Only the young—in couples—ever see those glowing little animals.

"No, it's deeper than custom. It's physiological. It's biological. These men don't even know why they choose stupid, undeveloped youth when they could have a so much better time with Mr. Benjamin Franklin's lady. Youth is productive, fertile, and they are drawn to it. They have no scheme, vicious or honest, in their minds for continuing the species. The two will only chaff together for half an hour, or he may lead her out to dance on the windy deck. She won't know the two-step as well as that carefully coiffed woman reading in the lounge, but there is just one thing that the carefully coiffed woman can count on—her reading will be undisturbed."

The littlest girl exclaimed in anger, "But if it's as deep as that—if it can't be overcome—there isn't any chance for us at all!"

"Chance for *us*?" I echoed, coldly.

But she had gone off to get her book.

None of this makes any difference to me, and I'm sorry I got on the subject. I am sitting quite alone—and happily alone—on my packed steamer-trunk, its lid having been danced over by two palm-extended stewards. Miss Brainfeather, my stewardess, since it is the last night out, has remembered to

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bring some hot water, and I shall wash my face and go to bed. A number of passengers along this deck have been celebrating their going ashore as they celebrated their going aboard. One bewildered lady has stuck her head out to call with great dignity for assistance. Her voice rings down the passage:

“Shepherdess,” calls the lady, “Shepherdess!”

To-morrow I go into the land of delightful repose to solve the servant-girl question, which has to do with women—not men.

Chapter IV

A LONDON HOTEL.

OH! Oh! Oh! How cold I am! And bewildered. I don't mind—I never did mind being hungry. I look back over the first three entries in my diary. Long paragraphs. Long sentences.

I think of the English writer now in vogue. She has no subject and no predicate in her sentences. Sometimes an adjective or an adverb form her whole paragraph. Once I believed she was crazy. But she is not. She is in England now and has been for four years. And England is suffering from shell-shock.

But I must not write like her. I am an American and could not get away with it. I have not suffered as these people have. I must try from now on to have a subject and a predicate. Or the publishers will flip my manuscript between thin fingers.

Adversely.

Yet when it is so cold how can one write at length? Or wash—at length? But I must go back to the boat—to the boat, which I thought was not heated. It warms me to think of that boat and the hot water for the bottle at night—sometimes so hot that I poured a little of it out. Wasting hot water.

Officials came aboard the boat at Liverpool and were hours studying our passports. I know now they enjoyed lingering in the warmth. I was one of those they didn't like the looks of, and was made to stand

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in a long queue. It extended itself down the passageway, and there we awaited our turn to come before the Board of Military Enquiry. The Military had lunch brought in as we waited. When the door of the room opened we could see them eating. It was past our luncheon hour.

After a while I was let in. I had reached the point when I was about to cry out, "Yes, I am a spy; take me out and shoot me," and have it over with. But it was only that we had no labor permits, and as I was the first of the company to have my passport examined I was sent in to represent the rest.

I knew that I would have to think very quickly about those missing labor permits, or we would be going on down to Brest and returning to America with a load of soldiers. Of course, had I known how cold it was to be, I would not have said that a man had come all the way from London to speak to them of this matter. Had I known there would not be a drop of hot water or heat of any kind in this hotel, I would have declared it was impossible ever to get labor permits, and returned to my warm forty-sixth cabin. As it was (having only read tranquilly of the discomforts of eight million Londoners, not having experienced them myself), I went outside and corralled an English gentleman who had come up from London—gone down from London, the English would say—to meet his wife, and told him he must see us through.

It is hard for a Britisher to be untruthful, especially if he runs any risk of being discovered. Yet the matter was fixed up. This is no Guide to the Young Traveler, but I think it would be wise, no matter how idle one is, to get a labor permit before entering Great Britain,

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and bear in mind, while you may get one for yourself, you can't for a maid or a valet, if he or she is to remain in the country. Great Britain is going to be fairly well engaged in the next few years finding employment for her own people. However, when it was demonstrated to those gentlemen, who didn't know anything about it, that no one but an American company could play an American comedy, we were allowed to go ashore.

By that time my emotions were worn down to a fine concern over my trunk and the securing of a seat in the train "going up to London." Yet the sight of the first "bobby" gave me a thrill once more, and I ran to a member of the company who had never been over before: "Look—on the dock—with a helmet and funny cape. That's a policeman. Isn't he sweet?"

The American looked at him. "Not as big as ours," he boasted. A great impatience with a certain type of my countrymen swept over me. They put clamps down on their receptiveness the minute they go into another country. Everything has a comparative value, and, since they are sturdy in their nationalism, it cannot possibly be as good as the same thing in their own land. This is supposed to be a British fault, but I find it more prevalent with us. And the more—to be very elegant—reprehensible. We should be plastic, for we are a younger nation, without a thousand years of bacon and eggs every morning to start us running in our set way.

In the train, with twice the usual number packed into our carriage (and Japanese generals with first-class tickets riding third), I sought delicately to suggest that the great charm of a strange country is that it is different from, not identical with, our usual

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surroundings. Some of them looked at me dumbly. It was all very well for me to talk about self-improvement under unpleasant conditions. *I* had not packed my traveling-rug, but *they* were very cold about the legs. They wished they were as comfortable as they had been at home, and devil take the joy of contrasts.

We were hungry. There was no provision made at the station for food, unless you were a soldier. To be sure, the littlest girl was carrying ten pounds of sugar which had trickled a fine white hop-o'-my-thumb path from the customs to the train platform. The waste had created the wildest excitement among the dock-hands. One man, out of concern for her, had endeavored to stop the leak.

I remember how we nudged each other, for in his breast pocket he was carrying some odd bits of wood, splinters from a packing-case. Knowing my England—the England of a decade ago—I explained that the working-man was generally very poor. The company seemed satisfied with this, and no one called my attention to a very fine lady at one of the stations carrying a few odd bits of plaster laths in a silken bag.

A guard came to beg for a match, and when we tossed him a box to keep he withdrew, gasping thanks like a dying fish. At the risk of being a bore, I continued to explain that they were a courteous people, appreciative of the smallest kindness. Yet I was a little perplexed over that same porter who had been so grateful for a box of American matches. It was he I had importuned to carry my bags up and down the length of the waiting train until I had found my company. It meant a sum of money to him—and a very good sum—for we are prodigal at first in England, and apt to become miserly later. I could recall

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how the porters would have struggled for the honor of carrying my bag when I last lived here. Now, all of a sudden he grew exasperated with looking, flopped down my effects, and walked off. He gave no explanation, and he did not wait for the smallest piece of coin. Neither poverty nor manners, which formed so obviously a part of the lives of the British working-classes in pre-war days, evinced themselves. Yet he was grateful for a box of matches!

Late lunch came—wired for ahead—lunch in paste-board boxes. Awful. But I am glad to say none of us whimpered. Besides, we were hungry.

But I must not keep writing of food (why did I waste my chocolates on those strangers in the boat?). It is late. The chambermaids have almost stopped screaming up and down the hall. If I get to bed now I may sleep a little, before their morning screams begin. There appears to be no housekeeper at all. If I now heat some water on my little stove with my last tin of solid alcohol, I might be able to wash, slightly—then hastily pour the contents of the bowl into the hot-water bag.

Yes, I had better stop. I am not writing well. If I am not thinking of the chocolates, I am thinking of the hot-water bag, and whether I will put it at my feet or on my nose first. I am conscious of my nose—it is sticking far, far out in the frosty air of my bedroom. The cold water runs from the tap whether turned off or on.

* * * * *

Enter Beechey.

Her name is Beatrice, and, since she *will* pronounce it in the Italian fashion, the abbreviation must be Beechey. Besides, she could have no other name—to

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me. Does it mean to you that she is small, and has brown hair, soft and straight? That her eyes are bright, looking out without suspicion upon a world that will always be suspicious of her and her mousey ways? Does the name mean that she is always shabby, and often hungry, I imagine? Yet she loves life and couldn't think of getting out of it. To die would be terrible.

That is because she is a painter. If she were a house-painter she would do much better. Then she could go back to America and paint up the few ramshackle cottages which bring her in a little money now and then, when they are rented. All the world is seeking for homes, except Beechey's houses in her home town in the Far West. There is no use urging her to buy fewer oil paints and more house paint. There is no use trying to make her see if she bought more house paint she could, in time, buy more oil paints, for she could put up the rentals. "They would then want kitchen floors," Beechey would argue. And probably they would.

She met the boat-train in the black of a February night, as she met me years ago when she was only a slip of a girl come to England because Sargent was here. She wore a little American flag on her breast, fearing that she might have changed so much I would not know her. She is still an American, although she has not had money enough in ten years to buy her passage home. Once or twice a sum had been given her to eke out the passage money, but she had unfortunately walked up the King's Road in Chelsea and had bought some more paints.

It was very black at Euston, and there were no porters or cabs. The Tube employees were on strike.

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Beechey had been asked to get me a room with a fire, but she had not done so. She said she couldn't find one. However, our English manager was down to meet us. He had chartered a lorry for our luggage, and engaged rooms at a hotel until we could look out for ourselves. We were very casual over this accomplishment, but Beechey said he was wonderful—wonderful!

For two hours we then struck American matches in the baggage-cars (luggage-vans) and pulled out any trunks we wanted to. I could have had all of the mineral king's, as he had gone down by an early special train, but my own were discovered only at the bursting-into-tears moment. Some day I hope he will give me a half-crown for having pulled his impedimenta neatly out and up the platform before finding them to be his. I suppose I grew a little hysterical, for, as I kept on pulling out trunks, I became rather proud of the achievement. "It's only a knack," I would gasp out to Beechey, who was guarding my hand-luggage.

"But you look so foolish, dear, rotating strange boxes up and down the platform," she protested.

"I don't care," I shouted back. "I'm warm."

I might never have stopped had she not called out, as I was trundling one huge box past her, "It will make you hungry." And that chillier thought stopped me.

At last my troublesome effects were huddled together, and I gave the driver of the lorry a whole lot of money to carry up my bags as well as my boxes, and we made our way out of the engulfing gloom of the terminus to the sharp clearness of the night. "It's lovely, isn't it?" I exclaimed. "Fair, too. That seems propitious."

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But Beechey looked apprehensively at the starry heavens. "Too bright," she shuddered.

"Too bright?"

She laughed a little apologetically. "We can't quite get over it—the feeling that the Huns may come again."

Then I remembered that the raiders had chosen their own way of making moonlight ever horrible to lovers, and to spinsters, and the Coras of life who measure a night's beauty, not by the constancy of the fickle orb, but by *his*. I looked at Beechey with a new respect. She had been through it all, as had these millions of others here. She still perambulated normally, one foot before the other, and spoke my language, laughed and looked the same—although strangely pinched about the face. And I determined, on that long trip to the hotel over frozen streets, if I suddenly found a Londoner walking on his ear, or behaving in what he would have considered a most unusual fashion a few years ago, to accept it calmly, as the natural result of thunderous Zeppelins, decimated homes, and dear dead sons.

That was before we reached the hotel. In my generous reflections this Englishman, walking on his ear, would not in any way affect me, beyond, one might say, treating the vision to an adventure. I was not to be messed up in this four years'—er—inconvenience, beyond what one must suffer from the loss of certain material comforts. Then we made our way to the desk, and, according to custom, I put a wreath of smiles on my lip to answer the welcome I would receive from those black-robed ladies whose duty it was to assign the rooms.

And I wore the wreath, and wore it, and wore it, until it grew faded and was thrown away among other

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dried-up floral offerings which, to continue in metaphor, were lying in a corner of the crowded lobby. They looked for all the world, to the mind's eye, like a stack of discarded funeral emblems.

Weir Mitchell, in *François*, wrote of a hideous citizeness who was known as "The Crab" in the days of the French Revolution. She is now behind the desk in this hotel. A British colonel, hitherto unafraid of anything, was bending over her obsequiously, his poor lips trembling as he tried to balance his wreath of smiles on features contorted with rage. He had written for rooms and a reply had come that they would be reserved.

"Not the truth," from the Crab. "We do not reply."

He retreated in confusion. Possibly his first defeat.

An anxious young woman by my side broke in: "Mrs. — is willing to share her room with me to-night. I've come up from the country—and—"

"Impossible. Hers is a single room," from the Crab.

"But she is willing, and I will pay—"

"Impossible."

"But, madam, I must have a place to rest my head!"

The Crab turned her back. A cold terror descended upon us waiting ones. A dreadful sense of guilt hung over us as we humbly took our keys. We were all of us afraid of the Crab, bent, venomous, despising us from the height of her secure position. Sure, for the first time in her life, of a job of some duration.

Clutching my weighted chain-and-ball trophy, I asked a porter for my floor. "Not my business," he replied. Once in the lift, I asked the lift-man of my luggage. "Not my business," he replied. Once in my small, cold room, I asked a passing maid for towels. "Not my business," came the answer.

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Abashed, I walked down eight flights of steps. Beechey was with me. There was a funny little smile around her pinched mouth as she watched my growing consternation. A sad little memorial wreath for a dead and gone courtesy. We ate what there was to eat—cold ham—and as much as we could get of it. I asked the waitress for spirits of some kind (I thought if they could be bought!). She glared at me. "Ninethirty and past, modom."

"Modom!"—I had been listening for that since my arrival. I had rather longed for the deferential tone which accompanies this highly affected accent. I had not expected to find it ejected at me as a stone from a catapult. I watched this young woman setting her table for the morning. She threw the silverware about angrily. She was, indeed, a catapult. "Modom" was all that was left of her manners.

Beechey leaned over and did something in very bad taste. She transferred the fat of the ham which, naturally, I hadn't eaten from my plate to hers. And she devoured it without apology. When it was all eaten we went into the lounge, an airless place, packed with men in uniforms of all the Allied countries. Women were with some of them. Our young girls, in their pretty Y uniforms, who had come from the boat, were standing about confusedly, trying to be gay on the eve of their great adventure. Every one was smoking, and the calls for a match from the few waiters was incessant. A lighted match would go from man to man. A negro, in a British uniform, sat at a small table with a blond girl—obviously not a lady—as his companion. His black hand covered hers as it lay on the arm of her chair. One of the Y girls looked at me—she was sick about the mouth.

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Beechey could not get a taxi to drive back to Chelsea. We would try, as each cab drove up with its freight, but always some one had a prior claim. Some one who had been running along the street after it. Once I offered a sum which I thought tempting and was laughed at. Once, since the cab remained empty, I repeated anxiously my plea that he would drive Beechey home. My American accent growing sharper in my nervousness smote him unpleasantly on the ear. Annoyed at my insistence, he let me have it: "No! No! No! That's English, eyen't it?"

"You bet it's English—pure English. And it takes an Englishman to say it!" I was frightened of myself. I could have cried with disappointment.

But, hold on to this. After a while, as I watched those rich patrons running along, hoping for the cab, I thought of the old days when an underfed man, espying boxes on top of a four-wheeler that must sooner or later be taken off, would run through these same London streets that he might earn a few pence carrying these boxes into the house. Flop-flop would go his broken soles as he would patter along behind us as we sat proudly in the four-wheeler. His ragged garments invited the raw air; his breath would come, labored and agonizing, toward the end of the trip. And for a few pence!

So, penetrating the bewilderment and misery and heartache of that first night in England came a shaft of light. It was not of the moon's rays, a warmer light, that sent a glow through my frame. It was a conviction, the more to be accepted in that it was founded not on comfort, but discomfort, an illuminating belief that this hideous chaos, this reversal of the glass, was
ALL RIGHT!

Chapter V

A LONDON HOTEL.

HOW much of it rests with me to make it *all right* I am yet to find out. One step at a time. At least I have already found out that some of it *must* be me. Once, in England, civility was handed me on a platter, asking nothing in exchange. Now I must earn it.

I arose the next morning with the firm intention of making myself liked. To be sure, I had no success with the Crab, who said if I didn't care for my room there were plenty who did. A room-famished naval officer, who was standing back of me, was decent enough to whisper, "Don't give up the room," the phrase coming natural to him, no doubt, with the precept of our own Commodore Perry in his mind. He knew, and I am beginning to know, that there aren't any rooms in London. He had put an advertisement in the papers, offering five pounds to any one who could find him comfortable quarters, for he had no time or legs, or other means of perambulation, to look for lodgings. He was philosophic, however. He assured me that there are over twenty thousand hotel bedrooms now occupied as war offices, and when these hotels are released and the Swiss proprietors (every one is Swiss nowadays) could take them over the problem would be, in a measure, solved. "Live, horse, till spring, and grass will grow."

We talked to each other without ceremony. All

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the guests in the hotel are herded in a common bond of misery. The breakfast sausages are cold, or bad, or "run out." I never knew such sausages for gadding. But in my pursuit of being accepted as an agreeable person I beamed upon and tipped the waiter, who stole two lumps of sugar for me from some guest who had left the cover off his canister. People wander through the hotel halls with a jar of marmalade in one hand and a little sugar packet in the other. One gets very sticky in brushing past them.

When I at last ventured forth into the rain and snow to report at my English manager's office I undoubtedly made the girl bus conductor like me by my open admiration of her little patent-leather bonnet. She was the cheeriest person, punching tickets with blue, cracked hands. "'Nk you—'nk you," with each ticket, which brought tears of gratitude to my eyes.

"Hurry on," she admonished, and "Off you go" to a clinging one when the bus was full. Ringing the bell if she was below, and stamping with her boot, as heavier boots stamped in the old days, when she was collecting on top. Alert, firm, and uncomplaining. One low youth must have whispered to her something more or less indecent. But she jerked her thumb upward. "Gaow on up," was her only response.

A woman passenger's eye met mine. "A girl conductor killed a man in the Mile End Road for not much more than that," she remarked.

"Good job, too," cheerfully commented an old gentleman opposite.

I have found that we talk together in the buses now. But the talk is largely composed of growls—growls, for some reason, directed against the govern-

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ment. On my second bus of the day an old man was acting as conductor, his locomotion slow and painful.

"He's suffering," a friendly fat woman confided to me. "An old man goin' up them stairs! But a body must get wot 'e can these d'ys."

"I thought there was a great shortage of men for jobs," I protested.

"That's what the government s'ys—sittin' in their warm offices!"

I might have believed her if she had not called the offices warm. I knew then she was a disturber. Rather, that she *was* a disturber until the old conductor, whom she had been pitying, gave her a laying-out for pulling the bell at the wrong time. He may have been weak on his legs, but his language was still forcible. She got out—got down—blackguarding him as freely as she had upheld him, and moved toward the aristocratic district as her natural habitat.

While they may snarl at each other, or against the others, something very nice happened on the first morning on our crowded bus. (Five standing inside during war-times.) A boy in bright-blue clothes, a tan overcoat, and scarlet four-in-hand tie swung himself on with difficulty. He carried one arm in a cradle, but he was strong on his feet. Yet the man and woman nearest the door both rose simultaneously, not with the smallest expression on their faces which would suggest they were offering their places to him, but just getting up because they were tired of sitting down. The boy took the man's seat, and his benefactor stared fiercely at the boot-polish advertisement that he might not be thanked.

I poked the woman by me in my far corner. "Is he a soldier?"

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“Orspital case—thousands of ’em—thousands. It’s well to put ’em in blue. We can’t forget so quick.”

I sat back, feeling a little white. I had forgotten that I must meet the mutilated on the London streets. I peered out through the window which gave a view of Trafalgar Square. The color of khaki stamped the scene—it was the prevailing note—but three soldiers in blue were making their way through the crowd—through the crowd which made way for them—as there were but three legs for the lot of them.

The police wished my picture that first day, and I contributed to their Rogues’ Gallery one whose criminality betrayed itself in every feature. It was taken in the Strand at one of those places where photographs are made while you wait—that is, if you are patient and have nothing to do but wait. In the interval I returned from the police station to fill a blank which was handed me. I was not allowed to make it out at the station itself, which I could easily have done, for fear of adding to the congestion. I must go forth into a traffic-striking world, buy pen and ink, and in some remote spot, where there would be no congestion, write down everything that was already in the passport.

I don’t know why I should have attempted to do this filling out in an eating-house. Restaurants are places in which to fill up, and as they are opened but a short time in the middle of the day, every one was intent upon doing it to the exclusion of all pre-war interests, such as reading a paper or giving one time and space to write down age and occupation with newly acquired pen and ink.

As my morning sausage was “out” when I called for it—or *on* it—I was so ravenous as to order a steak in the most dishonest fashion. I was unintentionally

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dishonest, but the waitress had gone off to "holler" down tubes before I realized I had secured no meat coupons from the Control and was committing an offense.

I did not appreciate this error until I saw the man at the next table give the waitress a very pretty pink coupon out of a dirty book when she brought him some roast beef. The beef portion was about the size of the coupon, and my sense of guilt grew heavier as I wondered how many pink slips I ought to give up—had I any—for a rump steak, probably four by eight inches. Early nursery rhymes went through my mind, which in no way helped the situation: "What! Lost your mittens, you naughty kittens, now you shall have no pie," beat in my brain. I had a vision of the attendants carrying back the steak, annoyedly, if I weakly explained I had lost my ration-book. Then some important-looking person would step forward to ask for my identity-card, which was not yet made out, as I had just arrived, and the whole dreadful story of my deception would be revealed. I had—I never had had—a ration-book. Every one in the restaurant would look at me—"Eating up our beef with her American tricks!"

I thought, too, as I waited there consciously, of the men who order a meal in the Bowery eating-houses and devour it before they confess they have no money. They know they are going to be mauled by the bouncers (and one man was kicked to death), but they eat because they are starving, nature's last protest, eat miserably as the inevitable beating looms ahead of them.

While I knew I should not be kicked—at least, not hard—I dismissed the idea of eating up the steak

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before confessing that my rations had not been issued. And I really did not know what to do (for all rules take on a vast importance when one first enters a country) until a pretty girl asked if she might sit down opposite me. Then I remembered how pleasant every one out of my terrible hotel had been to me that morning, even though wet and walking, and I simply told the girl *all*.

She said it was not in the least "frightening," and immediately gave me a pink coupon of hers, which she assured me she could very well spare, as beef was so expensive. A few years ago an English girl would not—could not—have made that confession, so I did what I should never have dared a few years ago myself. When the steak came I shrieked hoarsely over its vast proportions and begged her to accept a bit of it. But I had overstepped the times!

However, she was willing to talk to me, following the innovation which I have already recognized in buses and on street-corners, and of this innovation itself I spoke to her—with happiness. She admitted it. She was young enough not to be annoyed over this breaking through the crust of custom, even though she had not reached the point when she could share my meat.

"I dare say it comes from our directing soldiers so frequently, and talking to each other in the street over the wisdom of the directions we are giving. Then the air raids brought us together—hours passed in the tubes or in the houses of perfect strangers. We were the oddest mixture, murderers, no doubt, and cabbies, and flower-sellers, and awfully well-dressed women coming from parties, all in one church portico, for instance."

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"What a chance," I said to her—I spoke jerkily, between fierce dental attacks upon the steak—"what a chance for a second (chew, chew) *Decameron*! It was the plague which gathered (chew) that brilliant company together (chew, chew, chew). What if each individual in that portico had told his or her life story (four chews), with that thundering terror overhead (down the red lane at last!), and all of them induced to complete the revelation by the unity of common impending death? Funny some writer doesn't do that!"

The young lady looked at me slightly askance. "I don't suppose they would print them in these days—stories like the *Decameron*." She blushed delicately. "I have heard about them, but we cut them out when we came to Italian literature."

I endeavored to console her. "Well, the plots would be different; you see, those people were Latin."

Her brow cleared. "Of course, English stories would be different, wouldn't they?" Dear British child! Accommodating herself as bravely as she could to an earthquaking age, yet with a belief that its morals and manners were not of the mild *Quattrocento*.

She brought a blush all my own to older cheeks when I caught her smiling eyes as I asked for cream on the rice-pudding. "I can do very well without it," I hastily assured her.

"I hear you have everything you want in the States, so I fancy it will be fearfully hard for you in England."

I wouldn't have it that it was hard, and I wouldn't have it that we had everything we wanted. Then, and since then, I have found myself pitifully eager

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to have been a sufferer in the war, and rather to boast of the sufferings. Various exaggerations creep into my story of our self-denials. New York offices in which I worked grew colder and colder in the telling (and goodness knows they were cold enough on those awful Mondays with zero weather outside). Wheat, according to me in London, went out of my life long before we ever thought of a war. And as for sugar—I rolled up my eyes (she had accepted one of the lumps of sugar I had providentially carried with me)—I could not complete the sentence. I was so overcome by the recollection of the sugar conditions.

“Surely you had plenty of sugar?” she asked.

“We had none.” I could say this very simply, without any frills in the voice, as it was nearer the absolute fact than anything I had yet told her.

“But wasn’t there any?”

“There was plenty.”

“Who got it?”

“You did.”

“Oh, I say! I presume the penalties were severe?”

“No, we were simply asked not to use it.” I tried to be casual, but wicked pride was bursting out through every pore.

“Extraordinary!” granted the young lady. “Extraordinary!”

At one time I thought it was pretty fine myself, but now that I am over here I find that it was just child’s play. I wanted to tell her, too, that I felt I was just a child to her—a child in experience and understanding and control. But with all that, she was so shy and young she would have believed me to be eccentric, which is unforgivable to youth. “Younger than I am, and with white hair!” she would have

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inwardly commented, and put me down as a vain person.

By nightfall I had returned to the police station of my district, and took my turn in the little room, which was small, yet, unlike those chambers appropriated for the same uses in Latin countries, was not overpowering with the smell of humanity. Next to a manor farm-house in France, there is nothing to touch a post-office or prefecture for ancient, unchanged air.

There were three amiable constables in attendance—perhaps I should say police officials—variously permitting bold spirits to go to Birmingham; admonishing a lady who had changed her address without immediate notification; trying to figure what could be done for a Dutchman who had lost his passport, and who, as far as any one could see, could neither leave England nor live in it; going endlessly through their routine with meticulous suavity.

In spite of my photograph I did not feel guilty when my turn came. The London police never terrorize me. They suggest, in the discharge of their duties, that they are on my side so long as I behave myself, and that they would rather I'd be good than bad—that it would be more convenient to them if I remained good.

In America, as each policeman enters upon his daily duties, he glares around him as though eager for a fight. Figuratively, he carries a meat-ax in one hand and a book of "Don'ts" in the other. I don't know who first defined the district that the policeman controls as "beats," but it suitably expresses the watchword of their majesties. Yet a New York policeman will give you as much assistance, if you need it, as a

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constable in London, and a good deal more general information. I suppose it is because our men are largely mustered from the left of the Irish Channel (facing north), while the bobby comes from the right.

The officer who took me in charge (you understand me, I hope?) said, while preparing my identification-book, that his wife and little boy came through the air raids all right. The information was offered me out of a clear sky—indeed, I suppose an air-raid talk *should* come from a clear sky. However, his neighbor's missis and her little girl—the one on his left; the neighbor on his right was a widower—those two were fair subjects for a mad'ouse. The little girl couldn't sleep without an umbrella over her 'ead. "In a manner o' speakin'," he completed, "you must fight being afraid, just as you've got to fight everything else that you don't want to get you. Here's your book, madam; carry it everywhere, and if you change your address be sure to tell me."

He was a very nice young man, and I decided to change my address and keep him informed just as soon as somebody died somewhere in London so that I could get the room vacated by the corpse.

I continued my reflections as I mounted a bus and swayed uncertainly on the top of it. There was no room to sit down, but I was lucky to get any kind of a lift. The great delivery-vans of the drapers' shops were taking their clerks home from work. Open drays were packed with city men. The few taxis had their flags hooded, as though they would never need to signal a lack of custom again. Private cars were even more rare, and when the crowd on our bus would discover a big limousine with a single occupant they would hoot derisively.

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I thought of our surface-car strike in New York City in 1916, and of the packed motors of the rich as they gave the working-girls a lift if they were going in the same direction. And I also thought of the placards even now pasted on the windshields of our private motors: "A soldier is welcome." And of the many uniformed boys who clung to hospitable running-boards.

And suddenly, for the first time in my life, I grew homesick, and had to drive back the tears so that the Britishers, who had many better reasons for crying, should not see me. I was perplexed over being homesick. Hitherto, it has always seemed to me that the brown earth was our home, and nationality but a trick to keep people safely herded. Now I wanted a flag to wear in my hat!

I have continued feeling this way, and I am not sorry, except that this sudden localization of my affections may not grant me the open mind which has been pleasing to foreigners when I write of their *patria*. However, I reflect, if my country appears to be absolutely *the best* to me, every one else's country must be absolutely *the best* to him, and the Englander would, 'way down in his heart, think me horrid if I let my own land suffer greatly by comparison—even though what I may say of his island is not always pleasing to his palate. So, since I admit I am homesick, I present this little story of a London-after-war experience as a purely prejudiced one—the expression of an individual. At least, it is seen through the eyes and heard through the ears of a woman who, a decade ago, paid a British income tax, and who felt that the privilege of living in England was well worth the tithe.

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Defining my sensations more closely on that second night in London, I realized that I was feeling the loneliness of crowds and the vacuity of traveling uncomfortably toward a destination which held no pleasing attractions. I do not wish to step aside—on a lurching bus—to moralize, and I am no impersonator of male rôles, but for the moment, on top of that bus, I was a tired man going home from business with a vision ahead of a dirty flat, a slatternly wife, and a bad dinner. Always before I have had something more or less pleasant to go back to—if it was only a sizzling steam-heater in a rented room. I had not thought of the dull despair that must be in many a petty clerk's heart over the ugliness of "Journey's End." Small wonder they drop off at the corner saloon. Had my impersonation of the male continued vivid, I might have invaded a pub. myself, for the bars were just open, and a bucket brigade was pouring steadily through the doors.

I was not entirely alone, however. I had one companion that seldom left me. Fear now stalked by my side, crept under my umbrella, froze my hot-water bag at night—fear of the *première*, still a week ahead. And I had no one to "plug" for me—not even a two-dollar mental healer to tell me that I knew my lines.

Now that officer, back at Bow Street station, was proud of his family because they had fought fear. But, inversely, it must have been easier for them to fight because he *was* proud of them. I was alone with Fear, on top of a bus, and I had no one to tell me to be brave or be proud of me if I was. I had to do it all by myself—and not get any compliments. It occurred to me that it wasn't worth while, this

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continual fighting for everything, and that it would be much better to topple off and be run over by a rich limousine with one occupant. "Death by misadventure," would be the comfortable verdict, and I could be fairly certain that the others on the bus would kill the rich one in the limousine.

Then, as I looked up and down the massed street, with thousands of us swaying high in the air (grotesquely like a crowd of holiday-makers on elephants at the Zoo), I thought how funny it would be if this idea were to come simultaneously to every one's mind and we would all go hopping over into the Strand, shouting, "'Tain't worth it!" At this picture I laughed out loud, so that the girl next to me for no reason laughed, too, and then every one began to laugh, and I saw—saw clearly—that the mere fact that they weren't hopping into the Strand, were clinging to the top for dear life, yet were laughing, showed that it *was* worth it. So I decided I had better stick it out for a little while longer—if only out of curiosity to see how I am going to end!

Chapter VI

A LONDON HOTEL.

WHY do we rail at the poor because they are dirty and ill-smelling? Why do we say that *any one* can keep clean? Curious, that I had to come to London to get an understanding of their troubles. I have always considered myself fairly well in touch with their miseries. There is just one way to understand cold, and that is to be cold; just one way to appreciate the heroism of the clean poor, and that is to visualize the ice in your basin, as you shiver in your bed—and put off the bath till the morrow.

Certain pioneer mothers will now say they always broke the ice in their basins—after shaking the snow off the bed-quilt which had crept in through the interstices of the log-house (the snow, not the bed-quilt, crept in). But certain pioneer mothers went on down to roaring kitchen fires. In all London there seemed to be no place to thaw out. Beechey, four miles away in Chelsea, was living *pro tem.* with an English lady who was reported to have a fire. And within the last few days I have gone up there when any kind of a conveyance offered itself, that I might get warm—no, less cold—at this grate. By entirely engulfing the fire—keeping every one else away from it—I could warm either the left foot or the right foot, the left hand or the right hand, the small of the back, or—by kneeling—my nose.

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My nose continued very much in evidence. But, in the mean time, the other excluded parts of my body grew so cold from the frigidity of the drawing-room that it was hardly worth the four-mile trip.

And while this was chilling, the chance remarks of Beechey or her English friend were even more dispiriting. There was a gas grate in the dining-room, but they had "rather outrun their allowance"—a neighbor had been heavily fined last week. There might have been a more cheerful glow simulating warmth in the electroliers, but the Control thought that "fifty units" a quarter should be enough for them, and, while it was not enough, they must now live up—or down—to the allowance and sit in semi-gloom.

In 1916 I remember how I was afraid of the army when I was in France—in terror of disobeying orders. Now I have developed a fear of the Control, a something which I will never see, but of which I have a very definite picture. It is a huge creature with millions of feelers waving over us all—with eyes in the feelers. It has a shaggy head which cannot be turned by an attractive hat or the beseeching eye of a gray-haired woman. There is nothing larky about a British Control. It is an honest beast.

I don't know why this fear did not enter my joints in America on gasless Sundays, coalless Mondays, beefless Tuesdays, and a generally curtailed existence. As a rule we followed all the admonitions and when we were fined ("we" being a business firm) we put up repentant posters in our shop-windows and tried hard to be good. I think we were not scared in the United States, because we knew that there really was enough, somewhere or other, in our country, and here we know that not only is there not enough at the pres-

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ent, but that there hasn't been for four years. And if we do use up our coal, gas, electricity, and food rations, we can't get any more because there aren't any more.

I have arrived at another conclusion which obtrudes itself unpleasantly whenever I grow impatient with any conditions: I have no right in this country, anyway. No alien has any right in England now, unless he is on a war mission. There are plenty of artists over here who could keep the public well entertained. But since we have come over, by jinks! we must keep our mouths shut.

I am keeping mine shut, letting off steam only in these pages, but I must confess that there is a great deal going on in the back of my American brain. I am wondering if one with means couldn't be comfortable over here, really decently warm, by the exercise of a little American ingenuity. These people accept their discomforts with magnificent stoicism. It's a great quality—it has carried them through the trying hours of war; but—I dare to write it down—a little more rebellion and a little less acceptance would have rendered this nation a greater service. Rebellion is healthy. It is growth. It is now in the air of the world, and something good will come out of it. If the people rebel in their new-found prosperity over early civilities, why should not all England rebel over discomforts and, though old forms must be broken down to accomplish these pleasant results, bear in mind that these ends justify the means? Of course it is easy for me to say this. It is nothing to the American to tear down customs. We rather enjoy it. It is like repapering a room. The old design is soon forgotten, and we

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find the newer forms more attractive because they *are* new.

I wonder if there would be any way of beating the game in a manner which should please the grim Control and bring comfort to the individual. *Par exemple* we had no rehearsal, and a black evening loomed ahead of me. I had tried several of the hotel restaurants, hoping to find a warm one, but either the waiters were on strike or they could dine only their own guests. But the rooms could not have been very warm—not “warm through.” Some of us may know the hall-bedroom temperature. First you think, “How pleasant,” then you take off your wraps, to find that “heated from the hall” is your landlady’s first and last lie.

The evening was so unpromising that I accepted an invitation to dinner, even though I had to wear a low gown and didn’t know the hostess. I went with Beechey to a far house reached by short trips on many buses and long waits on frozen corners.

She improved my mind as we waited on these corners. She said one of the great English poets had lived out the end of his life in this charming house which we were coming to some time or other, where he had been so comfortable that he had done no work within its walls. This appealed to me. If I found the house to be as she represented, I, too, would give up work and refuse to leave its pleasant confines until the constable carried me out and deposited me in 33 bus. Yet, after ten minutes within its icy confines, one would have thought the poet could have there produced his most passionate lyrics, if they had to be born out of misery. It was a large house, and it was peopled by one small, very pretty lady with a

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cold in her head which had a permanent air about it. Her long halls were like outdoors, her huge bedroom a degree warmer, her large drawing-room fairly comfortable, and her great dining-room indescribable. I had shed three wraps in the hall, and I had recourse to them, one at a time, as the dinner progressed. I would have enjoyed tying my fur stole across my nose, but feared that would call attention to the chill I was undergoing.

She was a sweet little lady, sniffing and chattering and proudly displaying the joint of cold pork, which was all fat—and all of which I ate. The joint had been a triumph. I learned that she had registered at a certain butcher's for meat, and had quarreled with him two months ago. This was a mistake, for no other butcher would take her on (each butcher is allowed a certain amount of meat by the Control for registered customers, and a customer can register but in one place). So she had been without any of the Controlled meats until she could ingratiate herself with him. She confessed that she brought him a bunch of flowers.

"It is good, isn't it?" she kept on saying. It was pretty bad, but I ate it. I mistook a bit of cheese for butter, in the course of the meal, and tried to spread it on my bit of bread. It flew off and fell on the floor and there was general consternation, to my intense embarrassment. I remembered how casual they used to be when things went wrong at table, and how I sometimes wondered if anything would ever matter to them. And now, "Cheese is hard to get," one solemn gentleman reproached. The loss had one advantage—it hastened the dinner toward its end, and I am sure the others kept looking forward to their

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return to the fairly comfortable drawing-room and to hot coffee, which my hostess "hoped" we were going to get.

That we were all looking forward to the drawing-room is my point. Why did not this little person close her barn of a house, concentrate the heat, and live in one room? She was alone, she was not entertaining largely, and, by her own admission, she had only three gowns left to her name, two to be hung on hooks behind the most modest curtain, and one to be worn. Yet she covered at least twelve hundred square feet in the daily routine of dressing and eating. I dared suggest that concentration to her, but, "I couldn't do that, could I?" she bravely sniffed. "The servants wouldn't like it."

I did not adventure farther with the thought that the servants wouldn't like anything any more, anyway. But, when they did begin to like things again, they would take flats to stairs, single rooms to suites, and not despise their mistresses either.

The parlor-maid was already despising her that night, and would pay no heed to the bell which rang an appeal or two for coffee. We could hear the jingling after each half-revolution of the bell-handle. We could hear the potent silence that followed. It was eloquent of the times.

The little lady shrugged her shoulders. "They won't bring it. It's Sunday, and they won't serve Sunday nights. Down at the bridge they meet every night and talk of their wrongs—it's awfully creepy."

"It's like the French Revolution," put in a gentleman, pleasantly. "I'm quite calm about it myself, as I am not an aristocrat." I was inclined to think he was, but found it expedient to become a son of the

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people. I was glad I was an artist—it's only a step from being an artisan. My head is safe.

So the hostess pulled a high-backed sofa up to the fire, and we all crowded onto it, while beautiful Pre-Raphaelite originals stretched their long goiter necks out of the picture-frames to look at us contemptuously. For the women of the Pre-Raphaelite school are, I am sure, the only Britishers who ever really enjoyed a frigid atmosphere. I am convinced that mere earthly Englishmen, who do not live on walls, but on floors, hate it as much as we do, yet, hating it, they accept it. They nobly—no, ignobly—do not complain.

Almost warm, and quite somnolent from my fat pork, I watched those ladies on the wall, and tried to imagine what they would look like if Mr. Burne-Jones had painted a bus-conductor's uniform on one of them, or Mr. Rossetti put a chauffeur's cap on the low-coiffed hair of his type, or Mr. Watts stuck under the arm of one of his attenuated damsels the smart little ladder of the window-washer, who goes knickerbockered about the streets. How inept those Blessed Damozels would be as compared to the brisk capabilities of to-day's Englishwomen—girls of medium size, brown-haired, with stout legs, and smiling, thin lips rather than thick, pouting ones.

I came back from the shadows on the walls to the realities on the sofa. The guests were mostly of the artistic world, but you would never have imagined it by their conversational topics. Painting or paint never passed their lips—although rouge-sticks and powder were openly employed to cover the surfaces of the women's faces. "Madame Lebrun was always painting herself. I don't see why I shouldn't," one of the visitors justified. I don't know what the Pre-Raphael-

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ite women would have thought of this calm, public-restoration-after-the-soup. Since it is purely feminine, they would probably have condoned it, but they would have been deeply irritated over the talk. Even to me it was at first as the Tower of Babel.

"But you should have been at Margate—that one week—they simply rained down."

"I was in London through twenty-two of them," returned Beechey, rather petulantly.

"I was caught one night—my clothes were peppered. A man running behind me put out my coat-tail."

"Put out your coattail?" I repeated, sternly.

"Burning like a pre-war match—barrage, I fancy," most casually from a guest.

They went on. No one paid attention to any other. But the ladies in the frames and I were listening to all of them.

"I spent four hours in one strange house I was never able to find again—up some side-street"—this from Beechey.

"I did that once. They gave me the finest drink of whisky I ever had in my life. Never could get a clue to that place, either"—very gloomily, from the gentleman who had deplored the lost cheese.

"Ah, well," said the little hostess, brightly, "I'm glad those days are over. When I found that arm near the bridge I felt—really—it was getting a little too thick."

The Pre-Raphaelite beauties and the visitor from Indiana turned to look at her. Smiling, smoking, the little lady who was afraid of her parlor-maid went on: "I picked it up and threw it into the river. People were so jumpy those days, it might have given some passer-by a nasty shock."

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I looked at the painted beauties on the wall. "You couldn't have done that," I whispered to them.

"Neither could you," they retorted, as they scuttled back into their safe, gilded homes.

The hostess went to the outer door with us, lacking a servant to help with our wraps. A sound of popping corks came up from the offices in the basement.

"Oh, I say!" she chirruped. "Those wretched maids are opening my wine! I'll have to speak to them—I will, really. There's always something terrible to do in England!"

"If I wanted coffee," I confided to Beechey, in a false, happy tone, as we were making our way through dark mazes of wet shrubbery to the garden gate, "I would have it, if I had to carry it up myself."

"Oh, no, you wouldn't," returned Beechey.

"Well, then, I will know the reason why."

"How are you going to find that out?"

"By experience," I said, glibly; "I'll take a house."

Beechey stopped short, her umbrella gouging at me. "Take a house! You poor girl!"

"Why 'poor girl'?" still, liking the "girl."

"It would be one horrible first night every day."

At that the awful misery of the coming *première* came rushing over me. It had been crowded out for a little, "for want of space." I found myself repeating my lines under my breath, and making strange grimaces, which I turned into yawns if any one in the bus caught me. The only topic of thought which seemed successfully to dislodge that new part and its attending agonies from my mind were momentary visions of a small, warm house and a maid (who called me "modom") bringing up the Sunday-evening coffee.

Chapter VII

AT THE HOUSEKEEPER'S.

WELL, it is over. The first night is over. I spoke all my lines. We are a success. The morning papers are heaped about me. I am in bed. There is a fire in my room. It is a very small room. I cannot unpack my trunks, but I don't care. The first night is over, and I have a fire in my room.

I appreciate that I should have been more cheerful in the earlier chapters, or, at least, given the reader some encouragement that a good time was coming. Not that she (all my readers are "she") cares a whoop about my comfort, but that reading of miseries may momentarily destroy her peace—the way those cheerful Russian and Scandinavian dramas affect us. We aren't a *moujik* or a Swedish pastor's daughter, but no Russian or Scandinavian writer has fulfilled his mission unless he makes us feel as wretched as those of whom he writes. My only hope is that my limitations as a *littérateur* will preserve any possible readers from discomfort.

Remember, also, that in the fourth chapter I said it was going to be *all right*. This is called "sustaining the interest." There were hours, before I got into my theater, when I would have taken even that back, had I not feared my gloom would affect the sale of this book. In those moments I had not counted on the

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playhouse as an institution, and on the men who form its working crew in England, and the women who wait upon you. We had not been able to use our own theater for the first few days' work, as a big production was on, playing matinées daily, and in the morning rehearsing its own road companies—companies for the provinces, as they would say.

But from that day when I came, wan and nipped, to the stage-door I began to thaw. I did not thaw from warmth, but kindness. The stage-door keeper, as fat as Falstaff—a retired policeman—welcomed me with strange rumblings, and the great bare stage opened wide arms of hospitality. Immediately my brain grew orderly—I was in my own milieu again. The business man must feel this when he comes back from his hectic holiday. Everywhere there was precision and peace and courtesy.

Surely the last to relinquish the manners of other times will be this old house of three centuries of drama. Yet what an array of changing fashions it has witnessed! White wigs—wigs of every kind—to quite honestly acknowledged baldish heads; panniered gowns standing alone in their brocaded glory to our scant, abbreviated, modern frocks, which one can carry in a purse; gorgeous gold-laced coats and silken knee-breeches to a strange mustard-colored cloth which the earlier stage heroes never knew as khaki. Patches, patchouli, coaches at the stage-door, gal-lants in the greenroom, to to-day's simple, pleasant order of a sober people in their workshop.

Falstaff had a small electric heater in his little cubicle, and here I was to be found between my scenes, absorbing its radiation like a vampire. Strictly speaking, or even loosely speaking, the stage was not

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aglow with anything but good will. This is the weather when the English lakes are frozen over for the first time in twenty-four years, when the ice in the water-trough at Hyde Park Corner has to be broken for the horses more than once a day, when old people, the papers record, are dying in their houses from exhaustion, occasioned by excessive cold.

So, while I in no way reproach the single radiator on the stage (encaged in strong wire, to keep any one from falling against it and getting frost-bitten), which was supposed to heat three hundred and sixty thousand cubic feet of open space, I do not feel that it greatly changed any part of my circulation except the heart. I like to see a brave little old heater like that doing its best to give the foreigners what they want. The *entente cordiale* could not be better maintained than by warming up the Americans. Unlike most radiators of its age, it was not noisy in its heated demonstrations. It did not begin to beat the Dead March from "Saul" in your comedy scenes nor snap at you every time you opened your mouth while approaching the emotional climaxes in the play. Nor had it aspirations to be a drummer or a boiler-factory. Many a radiator in our newest theaters at home could learn a lesson in deportment from its retiring behavior. It did not feel it was the whole show. It was an aristocrat in aristocratic surroundings, and no doubt before the war used for its motto that potent one adopted by certain members of English royalty, "*Ich dien.*" If I am not mistaken, there is German lettering on its side. But let this go no farther. They might uproot and cast it forth, and—if I hang for it—I will never look upon a steam radiator in action, no matter what its birthplace, as an enemy alien.

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There were two beautiful results from crouching over Falstaff's electric stove. So that, upon reflection, I am inclined to accept the heater as a fire-producing modern magic, with Falstaff as a modern fairy. The first result was Mrs. Renn, and the magic worked in this fashion: I bent low over the white-hot wires, while the fat fairy bumbled. To those who do not believe in fairies his strange growls would have been a greeting to some one on the other side the glass door, but I know that he—she—well, the fairy, was saying, "Abracadabra," or whatever the incantation is.

At any rate, straightway after these cavernous sounds I looked up, and there, on the other side of the glass door, was a very pleasant little woman, gazing at me sympathetically. "One of the cold Americans," she was thinking, no doubt. Also, for she had a kind heart, "How sorry I am for her—so far from her home."

"And who is that?" I said to the fat fairy.

"That is a dresser, madam."

"Can she dress me?"

"She can."

"I have a dresser!" And I rose and went out to talk to Mrs. Renn.

I longed to say to her immediately after she had told me her name that I should have spelled it Wren, but I knew I must control my fancies when talking first with English dressers. It doesn't do to be thought "extraordinary," or to have her tell it about that "she does go on." Yet I feel I can soon take a chance with Mrs. Renn, and indulge myself in some of my American vagaries of doubtful humor, even if she does not understand me.

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She doesn't understand me up to the present writing when I am talking very plainly about hooks and floor-cloths and dry rouge. That is because she is not accustomed to the American voice, so lacking in modulation. And I find myself putting cadences into my tones that I may make myself plain to her—British cadences which would drive my Hoosier relatives wild.

She herself speaks with a rolling *r* that is absolutely unlike ours, although we of the Middle West also employ it. I am glad that she is from Somersetshire, and has not the enormous acuteness of the cockney—you might call it cuteness in America, and let it go at that. One is happy to have margarine when one cannot have butter, but it is artificial, and while the life of the player is supposed to be largely false, I think we are happier—more at home—when we are with extremely real people.

But what I got hold of most firmly, on getting hold of Mrs. Renn (I shall have to write her down as Mrs. Wren, for I cannot call her Jenny, which happens to be her darling name, as theater dressers have the same place in the social scale as housekeepers, who are always "Mrs." whether married or no)—on getting hold of Mrs. Wren is the conviction that most of my warmth over here will have to come, not from material sources, but from fine spiritual emanations which kindle responsive fires in my own breast. It will be up to me to get warm, just as it is up to me to receive civil treatment. If I deserve it, I can have it. When Mrs. Wren and I visited the dressing-room which was assigned to me (she was very happy because it was the large room with the *chaise-longue*, while I should have preferred the small room with the ottoman, which was more in proportion to the

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diminutive heater), I realized that it was my kindly dresser who would warm me up more than the small pipe-organ effect in the corner. And while I will have to work hard for everything, all response will come more easily in the playhouse than out of it.

I felt very comfortable about the theater on my first day's rehearsals. I appreciated anew that I had some place to go each night that I would care about. And when one is forty, "going on fifty," to have one place to care about or one thing to do in every twenty-four hours is a gift from lenient gods. As I trudged back to the hotel on feet newly decorated with chilblains (the only thing you can get for nothing in London), I continued grateful. Little processions marched across my mind, with me at the head of them. Me, very young, young, and middling young, going gladly to the theater in earlier years that I might check at the stage-door some real grief, to assume for three hours a "pretend" one. The real griefs were waiting for me when I went out again, and I would put my hand to my brow, exclaiming, "Heaven help me, how long must this suffering go on!" But I knew, even as I said it, that the burden was not quite so heavy as it was when I went in to my work. And I grew to know, too, paying for the knowledge with little lines round the eyes, that some night I would come out and find it had wasted away to nothing. Then I would breathe deeply and cry, "Out of bondage!" also, "Never again!" This happened times too numerous to mention!

That these crises were not important, fading out with each newly acquired despair, goes to prove that the stage-door is a kindly and motherly old thing, swinging wide to let us weak ones in and, no doubt,

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wearing a smile. It is not to be seen, of course, but that is our fault if we do not know where to find the smile on a stage-door. The door is amused because ever since theater entrances were first brought into the world they have greeted the same kind of impetuous people, and all those people have had the same impetuous heartaches, each cause of the heart-ache taking on an enormous significance, as though there never had been, or would be, another case like it. Yet I believe there are fewer scars on the high-beating ventricles of the players than on any others of us who stumble through the world. Possibly because the actor wears his heart largely upon his sleeve, and sweet, fresh air is healing to all wounds.

It was not until I reached the mazes of Holborn that I became disagreeably conscious of the fact that the life of the player without an emotional burden to check outside the door might grow insipid, and if that was the case I was going to have a very dull time ahead of me. I had eschewed Cora's complaint, and while I have some quiet sorrows of my own, they would die of fright if left alone with all these packages of sobbing, passionate griefs. I don't know yet how this is going to be worked out. Whether the mere business of saving salary, beating the tax-collector, and making them cry ("them" being the audience), or making them laugh, is going to be enough to go on with. But just for an instant I was sorry I had weeded all Coras out of my garden.

Then I saw a crowd of boys in uniform going up Southampton Row, with their arms over the shoulders of an equal number of girls. One girl with her hat off was resting her head on her boy's shoulder, and was not caring how cold it was. This appears to be one

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of the conditions of the times with which I will have to grapple. And I wondered if I had really eradicated the Cora weed, or if I would not find it spoiling my solemn study of social economics, choking out all the good little plants in my garden of thought. And while this was disconcerting to my plans, somehow I felt quite light, and not so cold!

* * * * *

Asterisks in a book generally indicate that the author, having reached the only interesting scene in his story, is now going to skip it. The reader sighs and goes on to find if the happy pair have begun quarreling yet.

My asterisks will mean, variously: telephone, performance, exhaustion of the topic under discussion, or a guilty feeling over the exhaustion of the reader. In the case of the preceding stars it was Beechey on the telephone, with the information that she "had it." This news came to me after a series of preliminaries in which the telephone exchange first besought my number, then asked me if I was there, begged me four times to "hold on," again asked my number, if I was there, and, after a struggle with snapping wires, "put me on" to Beechey.

Beechey wanted to know, *if* she really "had it, would I take it," and I said yes, that I would take it. For I knew that Beechey was talking of a "*maisonnette*," which has so seductive a name that any one would take it, even though he or she knew nothing more about a *maisonnette* than I did. It was characteristic of Beechey that she in no way referred to the success of the first night. Although she did ask me how I liked the leading man—that she thought him

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awfully good. While we talk a great deal about the close relationship of all arts, the painter is inclined to believe that his exposition of feeling is the only one worth figuring on. And I fear my friend looks upon the theater as a place where salaries are paid every week in return for a certain amount of mechanical expenditure. To her there is something wrong about any art that brings in regular wages, and, according to this reasoning, Beechey is superlatively an artist.

But I am outrunning my story. You will be turning back to see if there are any asterisks to express a lapse of time cloaking a series of interesting events which might lead up to a room with a fire. One can understand a human entertaining any proposition in England that would lead to comfortable quarters! In spite of the gratifying discovery that the soul was going to be at ease through the kindness of the stage-door Falstaff and the Mrs. Wrens of life, I found the outward shell of me cracking and the vocal cords cracking along with it.

It is all very well for the "inner man" to keep toasty (a mysterious creature that doesn't have to go out in the cold and has no chilblains on its feet), but on the day of the dress rehearsal I managed to croak out to Falstaff that I could not, would not, open the following night, unless I could get the chill out of my system. And at that, feeling sorry for myself, I would have drowned the fire in the electric heater if it had not been magic fire, by a sudden flood of tears—which would have been frozen if they had not been salt. It was here that the fat fairy performed a second miracle. His *modus operandi* this time exhibited itself more by a bodily effort than words, for

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he lumbered up many flights of steps, I sniveling behind him, till we came to a surprise room, as though part of the fairy spectacle left over from a Christmas pantomime.

It was small, with sun streaming through its single window (and I am sure no sun was shining through other windows), a canary was singing in a gay little cage, and a fire was glowing in an old-fashioned grate, and, sitting among old-fashioned chairs, was the housekeeper. Next to the canary-bird the housekeeper was the youngest article in her room. She is a tall, fine-looking woman who laughs delightfully at all of my jokes, but who can be very firm when in the capacity of housekeeper. Next to her room was a warm kitchen, where a maid prepares meals if the English managers of the theater want them. All of this the housekeeper oversees, as well as looking after the whole theater, ordering the spirits for the bar, and, when a production is large, taking care of the costumes.

I did not come under any of these activities. I was just a frozen actress, with a heavy rôle to play the following night and a voice that was going down rapidly in its effort to spend more and more time with the toasty "inner man." Yet the housekeeper took pity on me, and when the dress rehearsal was over at midnight I found myself making my way along dim streets, to a part of the city strange to me, climbing three flights of stairs according to directions, and letting myself in with a latch-key to the narrow hall of her flat. Through the transom of a closed door I saw a flicker of light upon the ceiling—light reflected from my grate—and this pillar of fire led me to my present blessed shelter.

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The trunks followed by American Express, for there is in the city of London, at present, no swift method of transportation of baggage. There are two van companies which, if given sufficient time, will transfer your luggage or take it to a railway station, but the warning must be long and thoughtful. Trunks going to a station must be ready a day in advance, and I really don't know what the Londoner is going to do now that the four-wheeler is conspicuous only for its rarity, and the porter who once hung about the streets, eager for the job of "mounting or descending" the baggage, is entirely absent. Certainly the Englishman will be lonely after having journeyed to and from the great stations for so many years with his boxes on top of his head, separated only by the roof of his square little cab.

After I had packed my effects at the terrible hotel, I descended to the desk to pay my bill on the day of the dress rehearsal (it seems years ago, but it was only the day before yesterday) and made a little speech to the Crab. I was afraid to make it, but I felt that I must. I knew if she saw I was afraid of her it would have no weight, so I put some English intonation into my voice and was as condescending as possible.

"I have found out that other employees outside of this hotel can be courteous to Americans, but my country-people don't know this when they first get off the boat and are brought here by their various organizations. They think all England is going to act as you do toward them, and they become hostile. I am going now—"

The Crab was looking at me blankly, but at the words "going now" she opened the ledger opposite my room number. "Going now" was a language she

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could understand. However, I went on, "Yes, I'm going, but I just want to say that a hotel clerk like you does more to create enmity between two countries than all the bombs ever thrown at an archduke."

She slapped the book and struck a bell. The anxious ones around the desk were very quiet, then a shrunken little man leaned over and said to her, shamefacedly, "If the lady is leaving, perhaps I can have her room."

I turned away, but I heard the Crab. She was making hideous sounds like scratching laughter such as crabs would make, and they were all so eager for a resting-place that no one stuck up for me. She had the upper hand. She will have it for a long time, and then things will be *all right*.

Just the same, I am glad I got it off my chest. Courage is a quality that gathers force with its expenditure. Whenever I thought during the next two days of the horrors of the first night I would make a little speech to myself: "Now you were brave with the Crab, you can be brave over your part. You can play that part; you know your lines."

It was some consolation to me that I was not the only one in need of "treatment." On the night of the dress rehearsal I heard our nice young juvenile bleating piteously for the address of a Christian Scientist, and I knew what he was after. I went to him when there was no one else around. "If you will just say 'Courage' a number of times as you wait for your entrance cue, it will really help you," I advised.

He was a scoffer in life—as the young are—but he listened to me eagerly. "You think it won't be rot?"

"I am sure of it. Courage is a stimulating word—

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anyway, it won't hurt. That's the best of mental suggestion. Unlike medicine, it can't do you any harm."

He was very gruff about it, but: "Don't tell any one; I'll try it. I'll be all right on the night—it's the dress rehearsals that upset me." He stalked away as though we might have been discussing bull-terriers.

I knew then that he was brimful of vitality and that I possessed little. I can rehearse forever, and before the most snarling managers who ever puffed a cigar out in the empty auditorium. These men do not make me nervous. I enjoy the working out of a character, the creating of it, but a big audience tears me to pieces. The effort to give to so many of them devours my slender strength. This isn't fancied. Ask a teacher if she is not more exhausted at the end of a lesson to a big class than to a small one. To be sure, we enjoy the stimulation from a large house, for it is more apt to be responsive, but we pay for it as the creature eats us up. If any of you should chance to see me on the night that the audience is slender, don't feel sorry. At least I am playing easily and without strain—which means naturally and my best.

So, on the night preceding the opening, while the boy stood outside his entrance, thinking "Courage," in hope of pleasing the handful which constituted the powers out in front, I was flitting through fairly serenely, with Mrs. Wren to hearten me as the steam went down and the large dressing-room with the *chaise-longue* grew more icy. Beechey was with me for a while. That is one of the joys of English theaters: the friends of the artist are received by the door-man as though they were not burglars with a kit of tools in their gold-mesh purses. Nor is the

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player himself regarded as an inmate of a penitentiary, with no privilege beyond that of slinking through the stage-door in the hope of attracting as little attention as possible. It was made plain to us before the last rehearsal that no human being could step upon the stage proper save those concerned in the play, and this is intensely right, but a visitor can be accommodated in the greenroom, and sit in the beautiful old Chippendale chairs, just as though Mr. Chippendale had cunningly contrived them for the comfort of the friends of actors with the first interlacing of his ribbons.

Beechey, who, as I say, seems to have no interest in the play beyond hoping I will remain for a long time—and liking the leading man's performance, if not mine—had come to report on the possibilities of securing the *maisonnette* to which I have already (in this very de Morgan, wrong-end-first style of telling a tale) referred. While the housekeeper's room means warmth and everlasting gratitude, there is no accommodation even for the hat-box of shoes. The typewriter is under the bed, as silent as a thief in the night, and I have hanging-room only for my seven outside coats, which I usually have on all the time, anyway.

It seems, according to Beechey and Mrs. Wren, that you have to stand in front of a *maisonnette* a week or two before the departing tenant leaves it, in order to secure it as your own. I have always wondered how the cuckoo managed to lay its egg in some other bird's nest, and I suppose it follows much the same plan. The cuckoo is supposed to be a lazy bird, but Beechey assures me that nothing is more arduous than standing in front of

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maisonnettes—or nests—and waiting for the tenant to go out.

I had no clue to *maisonnettes* beyond asking if the present possessors, when they flew off the nest, flew off sadly or happily. From observation I have noticed if you do not like your domicile you always stand on the step, after opening the door, take a long breath, as though trying to wash out the atmosphere of your home and go springily down the street, far, far away from it. My friend replied that she had found they left the house sadly, but honestly added that they were an officer and his family "moving on" like little Joe, and may have been sad because they must fly to nests they wot not of. "This *maisonnette*," said Beechey, giving me the address, "has the charm of being in Chelsea."

"Is that a charm?" I asked.

"Oh yes, madam," said my darling Mrs. Wren. My new dresser was down on her knees, picking at the folds of my new gown. She never stops picking at me, in the dressing-room or in the wings, but I don't mind. She takes an interest in dresses and addresses—in anything that is mine. "Chelsea is a very good address."

"Is it important that I have a good address?" I asked Mrs. Wren.

"Oh, madam, yes," she repeated, forcibly. "Officers must have them, since they are officers, and actresses *should* have them, since they are actresses. You can do 'most anything you want if you have a good address, madam."

This temptation to lead an irregular life under the guise of a good address clinched the matter, and Beechey departed to take up her station outside the



"THIS MAISONETTE HAS THE CHARM OF BEING IN CHELSEA"

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maisonnette, having promised to attract no attention by "cuckooing." And so the rehearsal went on until, like everything good or bad, it came to an end, and I prowled "home" to said glowing fire welcoming me through the transom on said ceiling. Poor strollers! Their last roosting-place is always "home."

* * * * *

I had a weak belief when I went to bed the night before last—the night of the dress rehearsal—that this interest in the *maisonnette* would paint in a slightly roseate hue the usual black hours preceding an opening. But I awoke with a terrible weight on my stomach, so clearly defined that I thought at first it was my breakfast tray. I found myself breathing irregularly, as though I had run up many flights of steps, and then—ah, old cycle of old fears!—I began repeating my cues, my lines, and every one else's lines.

I was annoyed with myself. I had said only the day before, if I could just be warm I would be invulnerable to any further woe, now the laughing housekeeper was laying my fire, and it was as nothing. I watched her as she made the fire, and asked questions, with a view to forgetting. One can do this for a fraction of a second, then the horror comes creeping back, and except that it might lead to greater fears emanating from greater weakenings, I was inclined to lie back and bellow, "I am afraid! I am afraid!" in utter abandonment.

The housekeeper was holding a newspaper out in front of the grate to encourage the reluctant flame. My mind made a short excursion to Liverpool, to the porter with the splintered wood in his pocket, to the rich lady with the plaster laths in her bag, for it was impossible to buy kindling in London at

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that moment. However, she was using some little compressed blocks of charcoal, which were popularly supposed to be fire-lighters. After she had held the newspaper up for a long time, I asked her where was her tin blower—going back to Indiana hearthstones—and she had never heard of a tin blower. She had always used a newspaper.

“Does every one else use a newspaper?”

Oh yes. The *Morning Telegraph* was the best. She advised me to take in the *Morning Telegraph* if I went into housekeeping, so as to have a good blower.

“Then the women all over London are now holding newspapers before fires?”

She admitted that they were.

“How long do they hold up the papers?”

When I found that they held them up at least six minutes, and we both agreed that there must be 100,000 open fires warming 8,000,000 people, I discovered a pencil, and on the cover of my typed part (stuck under my pillow so that the lines would soak in) I did some rapid figuring. And by the time the housekeeper returned with my breakfast tray I was able to tell her that 10,000 hours, or $58\frac{2}{3}$ weeks, were wasted every day in London holding up *Morning Telegraphs* before bashful flames—and longer, if the household took in a smaller newspaper. The housekeeper laughed and said, “Fancy!” And neither of us could devise a way of turning this waste time into some use, unless you could read the *Telegraph* while holding it up before you. But one conclusion was certain, when this little talk was over: the housekeeper intended to go on holding up newspapers, as she had always done, and I intended to find some way of obviating it, if the *maisonnette* should become mine.

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I thought as much as I could of the *maisonnette*, and hoped it would have a garden and be called "*Mon Bijou*." After the dress rehearsal there didn't seem to be a possibility of our play lasting more than a minute—an audience that could find anything to laugh at or cry over was beyond our wildest hopes. It was so bad that the American manager gave us up entirely, and told us to "go on home, sweethearts, curtain at eight to-morrow." If he had cried: "Great snakes! You gotta put some humor in this rehearsal if you freeze your feet off doin' it" we might have felt encouraged.

"It's the boat for us," said the juvenile, as we climbed the steps to our dressing-rooms. The juvenile was glowering at me, as he had not been very successful with "Courage."

However, since I had come over to study social conditions, I would have had to stay, even though the play had not been a success and had folded its scenery like the Arab, and silently stolen off to the storehouse. With this great mission ahead my conscience troubled me a little over writing of conditions in a *maisonnette*, but I continued to entertain the possibility of securing such an abode, as the prospect was alluring. I don't know why wicked imaginings are more apt to keep us distracted than soberer dreams which might be realized. We waste as many hours as the fire-builders of London conjuring up situations that could never possibly be part of our existence. We are not content with figuring on a probability. We change the color of our hair and speak in Russian or any of the Balkan tongues.

Perhaps the "we" offends you. This is a book confessing my shortcomings, so if the "we" creeps in,

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pray remember I am editorially speaking. As a scrap of a girl, I spent so much time day-dreaming that I looked forward, with a good deal of relief, to myself as a grown-up, when I would surely apply my mind more industriously to the real problems of life. And when I grew up I continued to look forward to growing older, that I might "put away childish things." And now that I am—oh, undoubtedly—older I know perfectly well that I am never going to stop day-dreams, and that they will always continue foolish. It is a sad admission, but I suppose I must go on, in my mind, saving the United States President from the bullet of an assassin every time we read of a crank prowling round the White House. I will be stepping modestly forward to receive the Legion of Honor for the discovery of a cholera cure, and I will deprecatingly allow King Victor Emanuel to fasten a diamond upon me for the rescue of ten thousand Italians in a Sicilian sulphur-mine. I will do all those crazy young things, just as I have within the last few days—in spite of my gloom over my approaching failure—been repeatedly backing out of the royal box in our London theater after King George has assured me that I was "the best thing in the show."

I will not ask the reader if she, too, builds these foolish castles inhabited always by the same heroine. I can't believe it possible that the world could go on combing its hair, having its teeth fixed, making money for the children's shoes, if there were a lot of Simple Simons like myself. But there is just one way of finding out if you are a Simple Simon, too; if you really are simple, you will own up to it, as I have.

Although it was raining, although I had a fire, I

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could not stay in my room. I began to roam the streets nervously, as I have done so many times before. I went into a big shop, run on American lines, to have my hair shampooed; not that I needed a shampoo, but that the shop was American. And yet not very American. A house of any kind takes its character from the country it is in. The difference may be in the cashier's desk, or the iron rails of the staircase, or the "Up" and "Down" indicators of the elevator, or it may be nothing as definite, but a shop soon belongs to the nation to which it caters.

Tips are not given the attendants in the hair-dressing department, and this is not American at all. Moreover, the young woman who looked after me refused the shilling I offered her—and obeying the regulations is not American, either. She was a nice young girl, and, since she had promised to take charge of my hair while I am in London, I told her I would bring her tickets for the theater where I was playing. I don't know why I told her I was playing, as I knew I wouldn't be after the first or second night. But I went on recklessly lying—probably to make myself interesting, so that she would enjoy doing my hair even though there was no tip ahead to encourage her. I also said I lived in Chelsea, yes, in a *maisonnette*; probably I wanted to see if she would treat me with less respect upon learning of "*Mon Bijou*." But she did not seem impressed one way or the other, merely asking if it was not hard going to and fro in 19 bus, if I had to "carry my instrument," and I was so bewildered at this that I assured her my instrument was not heavy at all. Indeed, I did not realize until I reached the un-American clicking doors that she must have thought, if I "played" in a theater, that I

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was in the band! I should have said "acted." Still, it was a nice shop, but not American.

Her touching upon bus 19 reminded me that I might catch it and go out to see for myself what a *maisonnette* was, as the address was in my purse. I don't know why we say "catching" a tram, or "catching" a car, or even "catching" a bus, in the United States, for all three of these vehicles stop for us. But over here, the only way to get a bus, except at far, undesignated intervals, where it comes to a full stop, is to leap upon it as it is making evident efforts to run over you.

I can't imagine why Britons should have felt the loss of fox-hunting during the war, when this bus-catching game offers such rare sport. It is even more sporting. Unlike the fox, which does not attack you, but is always the pursued, a bus, upon discovering that you have picked it out for your quarry, charges directly at you, in no way slackening its speed, with all the tremendous courage of beasts of the jungle. If it does not succeed in jumping on you, it hoots derisively as you step back, and squirts liquid all over you, something after the manner of an animal highly prized for its fur—but not a fox. To be sure, a man cannot fall off his horse if he misses the step, and be trampled upon by horses coming up behind him, but he can fall in the mud and be run over by other motor-buses anxious to get in at the death. And he can talk just as interestingly of the day's run when his friends come to see him in the hospital as though he had a little plummy tail to show for his morning exercise.

These fond fancies come to me now, but they didn't yesterday, as I rode, mud-splashed, after my third

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engagement with a 19 bus. Yet the struggle went on to keep distracted. At one period on the bus it seemed the most ignoble struggle in the world. This was when the vehicle halted, not at the usual stopping-place, and two nuns, one girl in khaki, and one old man arose from their seats near the door as four one-legged, very young men hopped on. All were friends, all were laughing. Only one was in hospital-blue, two were in officers' uniforms, and the fourth in civilian dress. He had, in the words of Mrs. Wren, been "demobbed."

There was a great collection of crutches after they were settled, and a stacking of them up in the little space under the iron staircase which leads aloft. Once the conductor accommodated himself to this space, but for the rest of our lives—my life, anyway—this little closet will be devoted to these sad trophies of the war.

It was not the boy in hospital-blue that "got me," nor the men who would soon be "demobbed." It was the one-legged civilian, the civilian like myself, who set before me a consciousness of a new task that we can never finish. We must adapt ourselves to the vista of any street we may walk along, with at least one armless, or legless, or scarred boy within the area of our vision. We must remake our lives to this condition; must expend pity, yet never exhaust it; must become practical even while we remain pitiful; must accept these *mutilés* as though they were body-whole, since they are mind-whole, yet exquisitely discriminate that the burden we lay upon them is not too great for their physical limitations.

The rebellion that is not new to me, that devoured me throughout France whenever I visited a hospital,

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began creeping into my veins as malaria returns to the sufferer of old. Yet the words of a French surgeon recall themselves for my comfort. He had been showing me what they could do for a man without a face, and I had contemplated the grotesque restoration after two years of hospital agony.

"I think he would have been better dead," was all I could say of his handiwork.

"Yes, madam, you think so. But the boy did not."

And I suppose so long as the vital forces of a man continue that he really does want to live. Certainly, these four young fellows were getting a great deal out of a rainy afternoon. The civilian, more agile than the rest, made a bet that he could hop on top without his crutches, and did so; the three remained below to argue with the conductress—she was wearing her delightful tarpaulin bonnet—that they should only pay half-fare, since a portion of each of them was paying for what space they were occupying in France. The bus conductress looked delighted, but flustered: "Full fare, gentlemen; you've still something to sit down with," she retorted. For which she received sixpence from the major of the party for "being a good girl."

Up in my far corner I pressed my face against the glass to look out upon the wetness of Cadogan Place, which continues a place of intrigue, with a gay air about it, even in bad weather. How surprised those officers would have been had they known my mental processes. "Can't you get anything out of those poor chaps?" I was saying to myself. "If they could go through their baptism of real fire, can't you go on to a full stage and speak a few fool lines without fear? Is it important to the world, to this terrible world

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dealing with vast complications, whether you give a rotten performance or not? Good Heavens! it's all pretend, and it's only three hours. Can't you play you're a soldier for just one night? Here's a thought: Bob died fighting; he was an actor; how pleased he would be if he knew that some of his spirit was helping a comrade of a theater through an hour of trial. Show some of Bob's spirit, and go on fighting. You've got your legs and your arms and your eyes. You've even got a job—you're the luckiest of women."

It worked. It worked for a while, but, would you believe it, by five o'clock I was inclined to think that the man with his leg off, and no first night ahead of him, had the best of it. I suppose we suffer over efforts that are really not important to the cosmic scheme because, after all, they are our way of expression in life. If we didn't give a hang whether or not we succeeded, all of the little arteries that vein the peopled universe would atrophy; we would move on sluggishly, aimlessly, until we perished of inaction. No matter what our task is, it is ours, and we must care about it. I would not go on at such a boring rate, talking to whatever slender public this book may reach anent the trials of a business of which they will never be a part, if I did not feel that all of us, after one fashion or another, experience this terror which is attendant upon initiative.

I am sure, too, that the hour comes to each of us when, enraged by this fear that seems about to engulf us, we cry, sternly: "I will not suffer this nonsense further. I will not be devoured by this monster of my own making," and straightway find that the turbulence has given place to calm. One might argue that if we did this with the first qualm, we could save

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ourselves a good deal of harassment, but it is only when I have reached the top note of suffering that this inner strength gathers its fierce forces for the "Great Push."

I made this speech to myself at 5.15, after I had left the little park upon which my *maisonnette* gave. I had been walking about the square for some time, viewing the premises from different angles. On the whole, the house was not disappointing, although, like every other fond imagining, it was not what I had expected. It had no gate and no wall and no garden—at least, not in front. It was one of a hundred others in the square, so disconcertingly alike that if I were a man going out to a reunion of my *alumni* I should tie a large bow to my particular area railings (something with loops to catch on to), that I might locate my happy home upon my return without greatly inconveniencing the neighbors. There were no preliminaries to the front door beyond a white calcimined low stoop, yet I had always wanted one of these whitened bits of flagging for my own, and had once contemplated living in Philadelphia or Baltimore that I might be such a householder.

I made a swift tour about the square immediately upon my arrival to see if there were any tablets in the walls. I understand that, next to tombstones, there are more tablets in Chelsea than any other part of London. Yet I was disappointed in this, and I presume the amazing respectability of the neighborhood had discouraged the artistic. To be sure, now and then a householder had painted his door an art shade. My door was mauve, which delighted me with its portent, and there were curtains to match at the ground-floor windows which looked directly

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upon the street. By tilting my umbrella up suddenly as I went by (I went by a number of times, screened by my brolly), I could see a fire blazing recklessly on the hearth in this room, and once, when a maid left the front door open to dispute the excellence of potatoes with the grocer's boy, I could look right through the shallow house, beyond another open door in the rear, and saw a garden with a tree in it.

While I made a mental reservation that if the house became mine I would not leave the doors open, no matter on what tree I looked, it was the bare branches of these majestic friends which overcame any slight disappointment in "*Mon Bijou*." There was not only the one in the back yard—"back yard" is never used in this country; it is very low—but magnificent creatures in the park were waving hospitable arms at me, taking away the bleakness by a decoration of myriads of little hanging balls. Although spring was a long way off on this February day, it is never difficult to imagine its proximity if we have so much as a trunk on which to festoon our fancies. I always like to be where I can watch at least one tree go through its various processes of completing its summer wardrobe. It's the only creature I know which emerges well garbed from the hands of a home dressmaker. Even if one is languid over clothes, at the first little reddish bud one begins to collect samples and look in shop-windows.

The trees had it, and I could scarcely keep from cuckooing myself when a tall officer and a short wife passed through the purple door and left their home "to darkness and to me." I was annoyed that Beechey was not on guard, although the night before she had muttered something, very practical for her,

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about going to see the agent. I particularly wanted her, as the size of the house made me uneasy. It was going to be too big for me. I would have to pay rent for four floors, yet, according to my argument as opposed to the methods of the lady in the suburban villa, I would not be living wisely if I used more than two rooms. And why was an obviously full-grown house called a *maisonnette*, anyway?

Surely this was not a square of *maisonnettes*. The fine old dame sternly taking her airing in a bath-chair, rain or no rain, who issued from the door next to my purple one (hers was drab), could not possibly live in any abode with so gay a sound. Nor could the small boy up the street, who went in and out of his faded green door a dozen times in one minute, banging it, endure in a place where French must be spoken freely. I made one turn around the square closely behind the boy, hoping for light from him. He was boasting to a companion of his huge feed of the night before: "An' then I 'ad my tea, an' then I 'ad another orange." His little companion was ragged and wistful.

I produced two coppers from my purse, then dug for more, as one loses courage these days in London when it comes time to bestow largess, and I caught up with them as we completed the promenade, again approaching the purple door. "Boys," I asked, chinking the coppers, "do you know of any *maisonnettes* around here?"

The boys eyed me, but respectfully, and the shabby one, hearing the coppers, ejected a reply—any reply for the coppers would do. "Lots of 'em 'ave 'em."

"Lots of what have them?" I asked.

"Persons."

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Oh! Then a *maisonnette* was an appurtenance—a summer-house, perhaps, in the garden. Just like Beechey to want me to live in an open-work establishment!

The boy continued well informed. "There is one of 'em in there," jerking his thumb toward my door.

"In the garden?" I pursued.

He looked mildly surprised. "In the 'ouse."

I was relieved. It was something in the house, then. No doubt put in extra, like a bath-tub.

"Of what does it consist?" Very craftily from me.

This had to be reframed three times. The shabby boy did not know, but my neighbor proved himself *au fait* with the word: "My dadda brings coal there. Hit's the ground floor *and* the basement, with the use of the barth."

"My mother charred there onst," broke in the visitor to the square. And then, in a voice sepulchral with respect, "It 'as a geezer."

"A *what?*"

"A *geezer*, in the bath."

I gave them the coppers. There was nothing more to be said. Naturally, the ground floor *and* the basement with the geezer in the bath would comprise a *maisonnette*. But what good would the bath be to me if the geezer stayed in it all the time? I knew my cockney; "an old geezer" was a frivolous elderly man. Still, I hesitated. Times had changed and, possibly, the language. It might be a turtle, and if so one wouldn't mind so much—if it were not a snapping-turtle. Yet I did not ask them more. Do we ever outgrow our fear of being laughed at! Besides, it was just one further beautiful thing to find out about in life. "Going on fifty" and something more to find out!

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Then the proximity of the rise of the curtain—only three hours off—again overwhelmed me. I hurried away on a 19 bus hunt, and it was in the bus at 5.15 that I hissed, with finality, "This agony has got to stop." And it did beat its fierce wings against my heart less cruelly.

The director came to my dressing-room, as he had no doubt gone to all the others before we were called to the stage. "You are going to make the hit of your life," he mentally suggested. I smiled gratefully. And I smiled surely, for over my heart, underneath my gown, was pinned a talisman that was working like a two-dollar mental-science treatment.

It was a silver shawl-pin that once upon a time Bonnie Prince Charlie had given to Flora Macdonald. The English family who had possessed it for many years were in the habit of sending it to various men and women of the theater to give them "calm courage" through a *première*. David Garrick is said to have worn it, Mrs. Sarah Siddons, Beerbohm Tree, Forbes Robertson, our own Doris Keane in "Romance," and, last, and surely least, it was offered me in remembrance of my appearance in London a decade ago. Think of being remembered for ten years! How could I have become disconcerted over a people who had still within them, among them, such charming grace and kindness? If the pin had been a hoodoo of centuries, I am sure the intent would have metamorphosed the bad luck into good.

I don't know how well I played last night. My comedy may have been tinged by the tragic lingerings of Mrs. Siddons, my tragic moments affected by the brilliancy of Garrick's humor, but, from the first summoning of the little call-boy with "Beginners,

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please, 'm," to the last lifting of the curtain when the company gathered about the English producer, as he addressed our ambassador and the audience, calm courage was mine. Merely suggestion? What do I care? I was not afraid.

The English manager made a little round of the dressing-rooms after the play, climbing the many stairs to thank us singly. I have never known this before, and I am not sure whether or no it is the custom over here, but it was delightful. Mrs. Wren endeavored to believe that he came only to my room. It was not the truth, but she is already so much on my side that she would skim the milk intended for a baby and give me the cream. And once more I marveled at the generosity of these gentle souls in life who get their color, their joy of living purely vicariously. I think we should step aside to notice and love them more, and not take them for granted. We should make a fuss over them. So, quite suddenly, as she was fastening my boots, I stooped over and kissed her on her Jenny Wren hair. And Jenny Wren said, "Thank you, madam."

I made my way up a main street so dim from the imposed restriction of lights that, while I could tell some men from some women, I could not discriminate between a tall W. A. A. C. and a short soldier in "British warms," and all faces were white blanks in the darkness. Yet these same girls, these W. A. A. C.'s, and V. A. D.'s, and W. R. A. F.'s, this initialed army of women who must go about alone at night, have made the dim highways safe for their sisters for all times. A *première* should end in a gay supper with intense devotion paid the artist. Instead, I passed along the streets of a cabless, Tube-striking

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city to a small, silent room and a glass of milk. But I felt as secure as though "himself" was walking by my side, holding my hand, as we had walked ten years ago.

The unloneliness of going about alone has come to stay. It is the gift of dead boys. This security for women is not worth one soldier's grave, yet the graves are as thick as furrows in a well-tilled field. And since this must be, I pray that every dead brother of a living girl may know that this new respect for women is part of the harvest of the Acre of God in which he lies.

Chapter VIII

AT THE HOUSEKEEPER'S.

MEMORANDA for the day: Fire-lighters, police, oil stove, Fuel Administration, Marcel wave, food rations, *matinée*.

When a memorandum ends up with "*matinée*" one might as well strike out all the other items except the Marcel wave and the police and go to the theater, for the day is done. And it came to me to-day as I hurried from police station to hair-dresser's that three *matinées* a week is going to interfere seriously with all other activities. There is no use telling myself I can accomplish anything "between the shows." War-time hours still endure. They ring down late in the afternoon, and ring up early in the evening. The audiences must get home before midnight, when all transportation apparently ceases. The Tubes are again running, but, even so, I can't imagine how so many people can find sufficient vehicles to reach the night performance at approximately the same time.

Dinner, of course, is no longer a meal to linger over. Almost any repast served in London in these days can be eaten in four minutes, but the effort of reaching a playhouse might be called a sustained one. Yet, with the marvelous adaptability of the English—a quality which we Americans are not inclined to grant them—the fashionable theater-goer

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who once rustled in at nine now awaits the rise of the curtain at eight.

To be sure, he takes his coffee during the interval (I like "interval"; it is a better word than the French "*entr'acte*," and more succinct than our awkward "between the acts"), and sometimes coffee-cups clash unpleasantly. At to-day's *matinée* I could have walked to the rail of the proscenium-box and upset a tea-tray with enthusiasm, but the occupants went on taking their tea, though the second act was on and the serious moment of the play reached.

I ran in to see an old friend the other day, and met there the wife of a peer who deplored with me this tea-drinking custom in the auditorium of a theater. The peeress sighed and said, in her pretty high voice, that queer folk now sat in the stalls who at one time knew nothing lower than the upper circle. Money had come without manners. "It was not so before the war," she assured me. I smiled at this. It sounded like our Southern boast of the early '80's: "Befo' the wah I nevah fastened my shoes." That was the great divide in the lives of so many of our own country-people, and again war empties the purse of one man to fill another's.

I told the peeress that I had come out of this fight a poor woman rather than a rich one, and she answered that at least I was in good company. Over half of the income of the average aristocrat is taxed here, and one peer figures that he pays seventeen shillings out of every twenty. Unlike the Southerners, the British do not take pride in being poor—they do not exploit it. They accept the condition as an Englishman accepts most of the vagaries of the war. An American told me last night that, at the close of

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a great dinner-party, he found a lady of title, whose name decorates a famous old street, struggling into her overshoes, preparatory to walking home. She did not bother to explain that she once had several beautiful motors. Of course she had once had them, and of course she had given them up. The Southern woman and the Englishwoman made the same sacrifices, but the British sister will never tell any one that before the war she never fastened her shoes.

The only thing that surprised me in this word from the dining-out American was the lady's use of anything as sensible as overshoes. Now that I can go to the housekeeper's in the Tube, I meet the theater crowds from the other side the footlights, and these same ladies of title coming from just such dinner-parties. Their evening wraps are of gold brocade (grown rather stringy), their slippers are satin, their hair blows in the rush of air from the oncoming train, but they refuse to admit that they are not correctly equipped for a journey underground with the proletariat. In America, a woman of the same social stratum would stay at home if she could not travel comfortably, or she would resign herself to plain Subway clothes. But not this woman who has passed through four years of air raids and kept her hair dressed as her ancestors taught her. It may be "tiresome" to have her pale slippers stepped on, her flimsy wrap torn off her shoulders, but the centuries have told her what a lady should wear after six o'clock, and she is going to wear it.

Now why am I going on about peeresses and fashionable life of the Tubes, when I should be reporting the exciting acquirement of a *maisonnette*? Yet I find that I must jerk along like this. All London is at

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present so rich in discoveries that I must comment on them as they come to mind, even though my tale will be a devious one, with very little sequence of thought.

Or is not this inclination to fly off on conversational tangents the result of the London of to-day and its tangled skein of living? I find it impossible to concentrate even on my own successes, and occasionally *do* talk of something else. This is a sure test of the abnormal condition of a player. The memoranda for the day show how diverse are the necessitous demands upon one. With an effort at method, I will now define *maisonnette*; first, the word in general usage; next, my own particular house.

A *maisonnette* is a part of an establishment that the landlady doesn't want. So she rents it, furnished—generally furnished—for enough to pay her entire rental and have an “egg to her tea” besides. What clever Englishwoman thought of the enticing word applied to a few rooms, with the use of the bath, will never be divulged. She is no doubt a cousin to the American who gave the name of kitchenette to a dark closet containing a two-burner gas stove. These little “ettes” of the English language are as the chocolate sauce on a fallen pudding, joss-sticks in a house with drains.

Not but that I am delighted to have this resting-place. Mine offers particular attractions. It is in Chelsea, it has trees, the landlady is a lady (this from Beechey and Mrs. Wren—I don't care what she is), and it has the “geezer in the bath.” When I was shown over my future domain I peeped timidly into the bath-tub, which is very, very deep and very, very narrow. The bath-room is the one which has

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the rear door opening into the garden. It was still open, letting in all outdoors as though it were August, but as geezers might, for all I knew, bathe as the Japanese did, my first glance was covert. However, there was no old gentleman or no turtle anywhere about, yet at this very moment the aristocratic landlady was telling me of the advantage of her own particular geezer. "It is a very superior one." she said.

I was about to scare the lady by blurting out vehemently, the way Americans do, my impatient ignorance of the topic, when my eyes followed hers, and her eyes were resting lovingly on a little copper boiler which rose above the faucets—excuse me—taps, and I moved closer to descry the lettering on the cylinder, and lo! it was a geyser. I suppose the word is universally mispronounced over here because they have not been brought up in a geyser country. They probably pin their faith to the man who invented the first copper cylinder for heating water, he himself having picked the fanciful name out of the dictionary as a novelist picks heroines from a telephone-book. More than this, it was the "Perfect Geyser," and it was all mine once a day for twopence extra, and "you wouldn't burn much gas, would you?" Also no one was to turn it on but me, also it must be kept polished, also I must leave the outer door open (but not necessarily while I bathed) so that the steam might not affect the ceiling.

"But the room will be so cold!" I whined.

"Ah! you wouldn't want it too hot, would you?"

I am going to like this aristocratic landlady, but I am tempted to plague her into a real rage to see if she will continue to ask me courteous questions as

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she makes her retort. "You aren't well-bred, are you?" she will probably query.

It is such nonsense for Americans to feel obliged to respond to this polite way of putting you in the wrong. The British avoid being in the wrong themselves by asking your opinion on the subject. They defer to you. They don't expect you to answer, yet I wearily reply, and sometimes—not wearily—sometimes I snap. "But you don't want a paraffin lamp, do you?" a clerk asked me, when I had strayed by error into the electrical department of his shop.

"Yes, I do," I roared back, "and I want a paraffin stove, too."

"But you wouldn't burn a paraffin stove, would you?" still gently setting me right.

"I will, if I can buy one," I answered, grimly.

But I couldn't buy a new one in all London during this cold snap. Although no one approves of kerosene—paraffin, as it is called—the coal shortage has forced London into this convenient method of warming a room. It is American, and it is low, but the stoves have all been purchased, and in a certain yesterday morning's paper an advertisement can be found which runs: "Wanted: paraffin stove for heating, American make."

I gave Beechey's address, after charging her that the wick must be round. "You know what a wick is?" I asked her, sternly.

"Certainly. It is what smells and smokes. I will have them all lighted and buy the one that smells and smokes the least." She does not care for our stoves. She prefers a wet log, guarded by fine antique dogs which prevent your getting near whatever flame there is.

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Beechey is to share some of the burden of setting me to rights, for she is to be of my household. This came about when I heard that the Englishwoman with whom she had been staying was subletting, like every one else, and taking to the country. Beechey has a flat next to Sargent's house. When she first came to London she daringly took it, although it was beyond her means. And so she has never been able to live in it, just as she has never been able to meet Sargent. But she is his neighbor, or her flat is, and she goes to see all his pictures when they are hung, even though it takes her last shilling.

Once something very thrilling happened. She had lost her bunch of pawn-tickets, which always travel with her, the packet growing thin or thick as the cottages in the Far West are with or without tenants. Her pride is fierce even in a pawnshop, so she gives the flat as her home on the tickets. And to that address these little stories of her life were sent; rather they were left at her tenant's door in an envelope, and some one said they had seen Sargent himself go into these flats with an envelope in his hand, practically sneaked in and undoubtedly sneaked out again without it.

I am sure if he was the one who returned them, and if he knew all about Beechey, and how much money it had cost her to be his neighbor, he would have put a bank-note in with the tickets that she might recover one bead bag, one tortoise-shell comb, one Dutch snuff-box, one cameo bob-earrings one—oh, well!—all of the things which she always pawns. But it would have done her no good. She would have framed the bank-note because Sargent had touched it.

We have made a business arrangement. That is,

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she likes to call it by such a high-sounding name, but it is difficult to connect her with anything that has to do with dollars and cents. That my house-keeping will be concerned with pounds and pence makes Beechey all the more valuable, for she is to look after the bills, and the "general," in return for a place by my fireside and what the general cooks and serves. "I do not find English money confusing," she said, with a good deal of airiness. I suppose it is simple enough with her. First, she has it in her purse, then she hasn't it.

But she does not intend to do that with my money. She ran out of the dressing-room on the day I made the suggestion to her and came back with an account-book. The first entry was already in it. She had borrowed a pencil from the clerk at the stationer's in order to do this, and had absent-mindedly gone off with it. The entry was the cost of the account-book. Only she had put down the price of it in the penny column instead of the shilling. "Account-book, 1d."

"Naturally, I am a little nervous," said she, when her attention was called to her loss of elevenpence. So she flew out again to buy an eraser, which she refused to put down in the book, as she could use it in the studio. She fixed up the price of the first entry as I looked over her shoulder. Again she had chosen the wrong column. It was now, "Account-book, £1." I foresee pleasing possibilities in our *maison-keeping* on which I had not counted.

A shuffling of feet down the hall presages my dinner tray. Food does not always shuffle in, but the old man from the restaurant who brings dinner into the dressing-rooms on *matinée* days has not lifted his feet for forty years. He is not a clean old man and

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he covers up the food with green baize which is probably his porter's apron. Still, it is a meal of sorts, Mrs. Wren managing to wangle any kind of meat out of them. To-night she has told me triumphantly that there is to be a sweet—a pudding made out of macaroni! Do I deserve all this?

The rain is beating itself against my window, but with a hot-water bag at my feet, wrapped in the leading man's second-act dressing-gown—all unbeknownst to the management who furnished it—I am comfortable. Whatever "wangle" is, Beechey wangled it out of him—not me. Not that he can care for Beechey, nor she for him, as they are both careless people, and we must love our opposites. The cat, Peter, is sitting by the radiator effect, waiting to see if it's liver or just a cut from the joint. There is so little, I am sure to want it all, but I cannot withstand Peter's fixed stare. There are two kinds of beings in life: those who give, and those who get. Peter gets. . . . The old man has put down his tray, leaving chaos in my heart. No, it was not his charm that did it. It is the post-card Falstaff had given him to carry up to me. On it Beechey has written:

Lease signed. I forgot to say there is absolutely no way of getting back to Chelsea after the theater. But it will come out all right—it always does.

Lovingly,

BEE.

* * * * *

Several days have passed, and I have not yet revealed anything but the bath-room in my *maisonnette*, although the original idea of this chapter was to dwell on such things. Even now I'm a little vague

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over my possessions. When a tenant has not yet departed and is sitting in the drawing-room which you are invited to inspect, you can't remember anything about the room except the tenant. She tells you to look around, but you cannot, and while you long to ask her for the defects of the establishment, the landlady is always with you and you can only remark falsely upon the excessive cleanliness of the place. You do not look for closet room or a chest of drawers, and you cannot remember after you have gone out if there is a desk.

I know very well, however, that I have two rooms on the ground floor, the drawing-room in which we eat, at the front, and the bedroom back of it. Two flights up is Beechey's bedroom. In the basement there is a maid's room, grudgingly furnished, and a too large kitchen. There is a coal cellar all for me, and one for the landlady, which she keeps locked, and I have as well a "safe" in the scullery, which is a fly-screened box with a door that won't shut. The scullery is the outdoor space underneath the front stoop. I do not think any one will scull there, although the day I was inspecting one could have done it easily if he had a boat, as it had been raining.

I have a slot-machine for the gas stove in the kitchen and an electric meter with a limit on it. Also the landlady has been to the Fuel Administration in Chelsea Town Hall, and I will be allowed a ton of coal—if I can get it. Beechey knows a lady who knows a lord who sells her logs from his estate. Or he may give them to her, but I wish to cast no reflections upon the woman, although if he does give her logs she is in the same class with those who receive pearls. Beechey thinks she might get a log or two

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whenever she takes tea with her. Carrying timber through the streets does not seem extraordinary in this day, and it is not dangerous. While you might be robbed of a log, you can, on the other hand, use it as a weapon of defense if attacked.

As one may see, I am on my mettle when it comes to the heating arrangements. Beechey is to have an electric heater in her bedroom and read by four candles to avoid using up my units and getting fined in consequence. And we will also burn quite a decent-looking paraffin lamp in the drawing-room. I will apply the ton of coal in the "front grate," and my bedroom will be heated by the warranted non-smelling second-hand oil stove. This stove costs five dollars in America when new, and over here eight dollars when old, showing the value of antiquity, even in sheet-iron. However, it has a handle, and it will go on little trips with me to meet the geezer. The gas stove is to be used in the kitchen, and as far as I can make out the maid in her basement room is to freeze to death or die of damp.

There is a grate in this room, but when I suggested to my landlady that a fire should be kept there also she replied: "For the servant? But you couldn't do that, could you?" This equipment of the maid's room interests me, for its meagerness is the first light on a social condition that is about as unsocial as a church-lawn fête on a rainy evening. Besides the bed, there is a very decent camp-chair, a chest of drawers, a wash-bowl and pitcher—excuse me, jug—and two nails driven into the door for a wardrobe. The cold floor appears to be of some sort of composition, and there is not even a scrap of the ugly stair carpet, such as maids generally have, to stand on

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for the morning's ablutions or for that icy moment when she wheels out of bed at dawn. And there is no mirror of any sort, although I am told that one is to be procured.

I was able to look about this room, when on my tour of inspection, with some calm discernment, as the army officer's wife had found it impossible to get a servant who would occupy this chilly chamber, so I had it to myself. The strangest part about this room is the aristocrat who has equipped it. For she is a very good sort, with a heart overflowing with love for dogs. She has two Pomeranians—Powder and Puff—which show an inclination to resent my accent. She is very gentle with them. "There, Powder; there, Puff; you wouldn't bite the lady, would you?" She has a maid of her own who comes in at 8.30, departing at noon, and who appears to work very hard for ten shillings a week, "and don't you touch the food." I have determined to do something nice for that maid when I come in. In that way she will like me, and I cannot live where I am not loved. I picture myself being loved by the retainers in my English home, and their working hard for me in consequence.

My crowning satisfaction over the heating acquirements has been the discovery of a fire-lighter other than the *Morning Telegraph*. It is nothing more than our Cape Cod lighter, rather meanly made of perforated tin-incasing asbestos, on a long toasting-fork handle. The ironmonger who sold this did not recommend the contraption. He said customers didn't fancy it. Beechey, too, had known a house to burn down, and a very good cook with it, from pouring paraffin out of a gallon jar on to a burning fire. I explained

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that I had bought a small fruit-jar with a top and the lighter should soak in that a moment before thrusting it beneath the coals and striking the match. She sighed and said, anyway, it was not beautiful.

I wish that Sargent would paint a portrait with one of these inventions in the hand of his subject. It would make my house run with less opposition. Still, I have something to be thankful for: I have just read that Queen Mary, favoring a certain atomizer, at a recent bazaar, has caused a tremendous run on them. And I suppose I should be grateful that Her Majesty has not shown a predilection for oil stoves.

To-day I went up to Chelsea for my ration-card, which is secured in a large empty room at the Chelsea branch of the Food Administration. After waiting for a while for my slip I was obliged to go away and fill it out somewhere else. The official said, as they did at the police station, that if I filled it out there the room would become too crowded. I can't imagine how I could so suddenly multiply while filling out a paper, but I did not put up an argument for fear I should be politely crushed by interrogations. However, I did not crowd the stone steps outside the room, for that is where I sat, unknown to the officials, as I again wrote down my age and general condition, with a bottle of ink and a pen borrowed surreptitiously from a long empty table within, where I could just as well have been.

In a surprisingly short time—to the officials—I returned with the papers, and as I waited for my book I gloomily read the printed evidence on the walls of the heavy fines levied upon abandoned creatures who had eaten too much margarine. It is an offense which I will endeavor not to commit. Indeed, as you take

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your turn at these various controls in London, any inclination to disobey oozes out of your system and a real awe possesses you, yes, and a respect for this machinery which has been set running by a people on a little island that the war might go on and on until they had won. My ration-book was a fairly fat one, although had I been an "expectant mother" I could have had a great deal more. Expectant mothers, according to the notices at the Food Administration, really have the best of it. Just a plain mother, a mother already, seems to receive no more consideration than the rest of us.

From there I went to Beechey's barn of a studio, where she was painting a portrait of a Chow dog. The Chow dog had not ordered a portrait, but she was doing him as he was about the only kind of a model who enjoyed posing in the cold. He lay on the model-stand, far from the stove, sticking out his black tongue at me as I draped myself over the little structure holding a few coals.

Although Beechey was very anxious to put more hair on the dog, I inveigled her out on a quest for some sort of a vehicle that would get me home from the theater at night. It was decided that a choice of three buses would take me down in the evening, as I would not then be traveling in the rush hour, but there would be no getting home at night unless I walked the distance from the South Kensington Tube, which was again showing an inclination to strike, leaving one between stations.

Beechey said it would be no trouble at all to get a taxi from one of the many small garages in the neighborhood. She has an idea that anything can be done with money—my money. She preferred that I would

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get the cab from a man who occupies a building erected by Queen Anne. A tablet in the wall says so, and little Queen Anne boys and girls went to school there. It is hard to believe in boys and girls during the period of this monarch. One can think only of furniture going to school, bureaus and chests of drawers, and many-legged tables receiving an education on how to be elegant, pure, and austere.

Of the many garages we visited, the proprietor of this one was the only man who would entertain driving me home under any circumstances. He was ready to make a "special" of it in a special motor which was not generally used. Beechey thought this was wonderful; I could hear her telling her friends I had my own car; but I drifted out of the establishment after I had, upon request, seen the cab. It was very special indeed, as it was undoubtedly built at the time of Queen Anne, along with the bureaus, and, poor creature, didn't know it was like a lady and couldn't improve with age.

The proprietor was resentful. It was evident I had not sufficient appreciation of a "museum piece," and he said, offhand, that a growler would probably do me. A growler, according to my understanding of the word, would have done me very well, as I was tired. But the bars are not open till 6.30, and, even so, had I secured a growler and "rushed" it, that would not get me home from the theater every night—quite the reverse. Besides, it was very impertinent in the man, and I told him all these things, leaving him in a sort of daze. I blame the whole misunderstanding on Beechey, who didn't apprise me until we were two blocks away—excuse me, the second turning away—that a growler was a four-wheeled cab which enjoys

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staying out all night. "That's that," as they say over here, and I let the matter drop—but I should really like to know how a receptacle for beer and a large cab with four wheels should have received the same sobriquet.

Before I finished my cab-hunt I came to the conclusion that it was used as a figure of speech in the case of the four-wheeler. Metonymy, isn't it? The container for the thing contained. For I was growling frightfully. "Everything is so difficult," I exclaimed, grumpily. "The only comfort is that I have a home across the water to go back to."

Beechey was silent for a moment. "Yes," she finally replied, "but I am thinking of the millions and millions who've been up against these difficulties for almost five years, and who can't run anywhere, for they're at home right here."

Then I was very ashamed for finding life difficult because I couldn't find a growler, and was, as a reward, put on the track of one by a woman who came up from a black cellar with a sign of "Mangling" in the window, where she was living with her children. Her husband was a carter, but they went in good society, for they had a friend who was a "fly proprietor." You may take this any way you please. If he was indeed "fly," he would probably get the better of me in the bargain, but I didn't care. I was at that weary-legged stage when I would ride home in a growler or a fly at any price named. Only, in these days of one hundred miles an hour through the air, it amuses one a little to think of the dead-and-gone man who first called a clumsy, crawling, earthbound vehicle a fly.

And I must step aside—again—to speak of this

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woman who came out of the cellar, for she was beautiful, she was radiantly beautiful and young, with signs of toil as yet only in her poor cracked hands. And I thought how wonderful she was to go on living in a cellar when she possessed so marketable a commodity as loveliness. Yes, and knew it. Eve and all her daughters intuitively know that beauty can bring a price. It is easy enough for us plain ones to be good, but the real Spartan is the underfed, overworked woman who continues a drudge although in these days of strong excitements one little promenade down the Strand would bring her in more than she could make by mangling in a score of years.

Beechey had stopped to speak to her, and when she caught up with me I myself ran back. The woman was still in the doorway, a baby at her bosom. "I just want to tell you," I stammered, "that you've been very kind, and that—that you are very beautiful."

The woman smiled even more broadly. "The lidy with you, she said that just naow, but she put it different, ma'am."

"She did."

"She said, 'With yer nipper in yer arms, yer beautiful. Always keep the baby in yer arms.'"

Wise Miss Beechey!

It was after an arrangement with the proprietor, who was only fairly fly, was completed that I began once more to enjoy Chelsea, and to feel that I would soon become a partner in its homeyness. Surely every visitor in time appreciates the sense of littleness that London manages to convey even though it is the most vast of cities. Each little town—Mayfair, Kensington, Bloomsbury, Chelsea, *et al*, which go.

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together to form the municipality—still preserves its separate entity. Individual interests are preserved. In the shop-windows may be posted a reward for the loss of a purse in that district, or a little missing dog is described in the handwriting of his master. Or other placards in a feminine hand beseech the school-children to look out for a cat answering to the name of "Susy." As though any cat answered to any name! Or there is to be a dance at the Chelsea Town Hall. An old illumination points a finger in the direction of an air-raid shelter. Dreadful rules are painted on park boards as to the behavior of perambulators. A grocer notifies us that the lid is off "Marge," using an English expression, of course, equivalent to "lid." All of it is somehow extremely simple and personal, and one can understand how lonesome a Londoner might be when meeting with the sweeping generalities of New York City.

I walked happily with Beechey toward the King's Road. "Now everything is arranged for, except the dish-cloths, and we'll move in." The bus was approaching and I held it firmly with my eye. "Oh yes, I forgot. Of course, there's the servant." I put my foot on the bus, subduing it.

I could hear Beechey above the snarling of the creature echoing my words, "Of course, there is the servant." But she was giving my casual exclamation a certain tragic reading, as though it were a casualty.

I called back to her, as the bus endeavored to shake me off the platform, "But I'll get one tomorrow." I couldn't hear her after that—not plainly—owing to 19 bus grinding its gears at me; but as I set this down I am struck with the thought that in almost every chapter somebody laughs at me.

Chapter IX

AT A WOMAN'S CLUB.

IT is summer! And I should begin this paragraph with a verse of poetry, as the English papers start off their news items, for I am glad it is summer, and am glad I am at this club in charming Mayfair. If I step out on my iron balcony I can see the green of Hyde Park. If I make one turning from off my street I am in as delightful a jumble of old furniture-shops, and flower-stalls, and vegetable-markets, and duchesses' palaces as one could find in the heart of Rome.

The upper chambermaid, who does the rooms on the lower floors, potters in and out, and does not disturb me, as I write, with news of the ill behavior of Jerusalem artichokes, shooting their green sprouts recklessly about, or the indecency of the "geyser wet hisses" at her. Becchey does not enter my room at the moment of evolving a sentence containing almost an idea, and burst into tears because she forgot to clean her brushes. I am an old, old woman, broken by three months' housekeeping in Chelsea—three months of generous effort to give to an unappreciative world a solution of the servant problem. I am old and alone, and I am glad I am alone and almost glad I am old. When I am sure I am glad I am old I can write *Finis* to this book. For I know that one must not only accept, but be happy in being old,

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if she is entirely normal, just as youth takes pride in its slender stock of years.

You may read into this hiatus, this gulf of silence from spring to summer, doings both grim and gay. Certainly I did not know that the last chapter was to be the end of my diary, and I fear my editors did not. Nor were they encouraged by my cables explaining the cessation of literary effort. In March I regretted delay, changing cooks. In April regretted delay, ten performances weekly. In May regretted delay, spring is here. That they did not reply with the regret I ever existed shows that a publisher thinks twice before he cables once. Upon thinking twice he probably considered himself well rid of these defective side-lights on English living.

I don't see how a woman keeps a diary, anyway. If she has time to write it, she hasn't time to have anything happen to her worth writing about. More than that, one needs perspective. It's all very well to keep a line a day. That prevents an inconstant reader sending a publisher word that the King's garden-party was on the 11th, not on the 12th, and the men's favors were not rosettes, but ribbon bows with one end longer than the other. And when one has time to look back and reflect one finds that the important event of Monday morning has no significance by Saturday night. The man who lives up to "Never put off till to-morrow what you can do today" may have spent a large part of his time accomplishing the unessential.

Then one makes statements which, if one could get the manuscript back, would be changed. I wish I had not said so much about not going to London to escape the complaints of lovers, nor assumed that a do-

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mestic complication had not a young man behind it. I confess a vacillation of mind. I am a bit like Hugh Walpole, who told us all about Russia in *The Dark Forest*, and in a preface to his second Russian book, *The Secret City*, informed us that anything he said in *The Dark Forest* was wrong.

I look over the uncorrected carbon copy I have kept for myself of the preceding eight chapters, and observe that I was about to get a servant, and was cheerful over it. Why did I not slip in something about a shudder going through my frame as I uttered those words?—suggest that I was sensible of an impending doom? I remember perfectly the breakfast that morning, before I started out for a maid, and my utter unconcern over a report in my paper to the effect that the ladies of a neighboring town had decided at a convention to call their servants, in the future, Miss or Mrs., according to their estate in life. I did not muse upon the motive—whether fear or fondness—that caused these ladies to adopt a super-respectful attitude toward their domestics, after centuries of indifference to anything but the work they got out of them. I had that eternal hope of a “gem” which accompanies a woman as far as the desk of an Intelligence Bureau. I still believed that I should call my general by her last name, as she would call me “modom.”

Mrs. Wren had picked out my intelligence bureau the night before, calling it a registry office. She had put on her bonnet and run to a theater across the way to ask advice of a dancer who, like most dancers, was a sedate householder with an eye to the purse-strings. The dancer sent her compliments, said nice things about a book I once wrote of English life (I

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trust she will never see this one), and wrote down an address and the number of the bus which would lead me to it, all of which I promptly lost. However, I remembered the bus number, and I thought if I gave the conductor sixpence, he, or she, might look out for me.

It was a he, an observing man to the point of clairvoyance. I got no farther than, "I want to go along the Fulham Road till I find—" when he completed my phrase with, "Mrs. —, the registry, 481."

He was a man wasted on a bus; he should be sitting behind a crystal ball, telling about a dark rival and a journey. "How did you know I wanted to go there?" I asked him.

"It's the face that does it, anxious-like. I picks 'em out. All the lidies 'as it."

For the first time that day I felt the chill of the rain! You know—suddenly your skirts are wet? And I moved down toward the door, so as to get out ahead of another very anxious-looking lady who might, by a few inches' advantage, secure my treasure. I had a vision of calling out, as she would patter, breathless, behind me, from the bus to the registry door, "I'm first; I'm first," as one claims sanctuary.

The lady got down when I did, and she entered the office some two paces behind me, but she secured the only female in the many rooms, in the United Kingdom, I should say, who was in need of work. There were preliminaries. I paid a half-crown for the honor of filling out a blank which committed me to paying twenty shillings on securing a servant, but as I did not have to return to the housekeeper's, five miles away, to make out the papers, it was worth the money. A registry office is the only place you can write down

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your full name without going at least as far as the gutter to do it.

My adversary had the advantage of me, as she was known to the large blond attendant who was trying hard to put it all over me with her accent. Or perhaps only Americans are asked to pay half-crowns. Still, I was glad to do it, for the single domestic in the room was looking on, and when she saw with what good grace I relinquished a half-crown she would, naturally, prefer to be in my generous employ.

Yet she did not prefer it! She muttered something to the blond lady manager, who made signs which resulted in my adversary and the girl going off into a remote cubicle, probably to poke fun at me. I looked inquiring. "Phyllis" (and her name was Phyllis!) "doesn't care to go to an American, madam," explained the manageress, attaching to this statement no air of surprise, but as one might say, "Phyllis would prefer not to enter the household of bo-constrictors."

"Why not?" I immediately asked.

The attendant shrugged her shoulders—a poor shrug, copied from visiting Belgians. "They prefer English ways. Anything new fuses them, doesn't it, madam?"

I thought of that bedroom in my *maisonnette*, without a mirror, and a bare floor, with two nails for the wardrobe, and then of the sort of room a mistress of the same position in life would offer—would be obliged to offer—a maid at home, and I wondered if it would really fuss them if they had what comforts their ugly lives surely entitle them to. Or must we teach them even to accept comforts?

I didn't appreciate it then, but this interrogatory

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statement of the clerk is one of the stumbling-blocks to the future happiness of the English servant. She is no longer content. She has reached that milestone—has achieved it. But she has weary years of tradition to overcome before she can accept the new order of things with any degree of satisfaction. "It fusses her." The British lower class doesn't like to be fussed. It exercises new muscles in the brain, and this is fatiguing. It is easier to go along—growling, but accepting.

I say hastily, now, before my British friends arm themselves with pen and paper, that they are not unkind mistresses. They are very kind. I have never heard an English voice rate a servant as I have heard an American voice do. The mistresses are civil, but the civility, to my American mind, is only voice-deep. The old feudal system obligated a certain decent attitude toward the serf, but it is an attitude of manner, not of concern. Yet, so far, the British servant prefers it.

I expressed some surprise to the blonde over the emptiness of her rooms. I felt that my half-crown, entitled me to freedom of speech, and she informed me she would send out post-cards so that I might have an array from which to pick the following noon. She had a card-filing index of a thousand names or so, and began shooting the drawers back and forth so recklessly displaying applicants that I besought her not to bring together too many at one time, as they would prove an embarrassment of riches.

She intimated that she would try hard not to. She thought she could get me something very smart for thirty shillings. I replied that I wanted something very smart for twenty. I had learned from the

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dancer that the average general who has her bed and board receives fifteen shillings a week, but I don't think that fifteen is enough for a woman, for any kind of a woman, even a general. One would think that a general should receive more money than servants whose talents are limited to making beds or dusting parlor furniture—if rank counts for anything—but this is the case only among the military. The poor creature who cooks and serves, lays fires and climbs stairs, has small recognition in civil life. The harder she works the less she gets, and I suppose by this inverse ratio, if she did the washing and took care of the garden, she would receive no money at all.

Beechey called at the theater that night to report that she had the dish-cloths and had bought stores from the Stores. She had purchased several kinds of Indian meal, as she had cut out some recipes from a certain paper so as to give variety to the menus. I spoke from out the experience of eighteen years' housekeeping, "Cooks find difficulty with newspaper recipes."

"Not with these," she returned, calmly. "The printing is so clear."

When I told her that an army of smart generals would be awaiting my selection the following noon, she grew restless, squinting at my figure as though she were painting it, and finally advanced the theory that she should do the choosing. "I will be brought in contact with her more than you, since I am to look after the housekeeping," she explained, "and it will be important to have some one with whom I am spiritually sympathetic."

I granted this for two reasons. One, that she wanted it, and another that I had to seek some

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method of getting my two modest trunks and odd bits of baggage from the housekeeper's to the *maisonnette* the following day. My friend the American Express Company (I speak of it often, as I own four shares of stock in the concern) could not promise to call at a certain hour, and, as it was a *matinée* day—as usual—the flat would be closed after twelve. This news is not worthy of a paragraph, except to accentuate again the amount of time and trouble which must be expended upon the simplest details of living. It ended, I may add, in my paying a van proprietor four dollars for moving my slight impedimenta. He said it couldn't possibly be done for less than three-fifty, and when he was *sure* I was an American he said it would be a great strain on his 'orse, and "upped" me two shillings. However, he descended the baggage without assistance, which was a relief, as the housekeeper and I had spent three days worrying over who would take the trunks down the stairs, since the bootblack on the corner had the "flu." This may not appear clear, but it fairly outlines London's business processes at the time.

And the next day Beechey reported that she had engaged a cook. Upon sifting down the story of her glorious encounter with the regiment, she had engaged *the* cook. Two had presented themselves at the agency, one who was willing to come every day, and one who would come only three days out of the week. The blonde made every effort to secure the job for the cook who cooked but occasionally.

"But we eat on the other days, too," Beechey told her, "and we want fires in the grate kept going all the time."

The blond Belgian shrugged again, and Beechey

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went off into a cubicle with the girl who was willing to stay all the time. I don't know what Beechey asked her in the inquisitorial chamber. She should have begun with references, then to soup, and so on through the *table d'hôte*, but she probably told her, as I know I would, that it was a very nice place, with almost no work to do and every evening out.

My friend admitted that she had engaged her before asking for her character. In fact, she never thought of it at all, as her artistic associates have but few characters among them, and she returned to the blonde, when the maid said she would come for sixteen shillings a week, to whisper to her that she thought that was too little. The manageress had stared, and when she was sure she had heard aright advised Beechey to keep the raise for a little encouragement when the range broke down or the sewer backed up.

"Then what did you really learn about her?" I ventured to inquire.

"I learned that she would surely come, and"—a pause here—"I learned her name."

"What is her name?"

Stackpole passed through my mind, Mortlake, Sutton—good English last names sounding well before guests.

"Her name," said Beechey, in a low tone, "her name is Gladys."

"No, no!" I cried.

"Yes, it is. But she has a beautiful complexion, And, more than that, she is a soldier's daughter. Her father is still in France."

"Oh well, why didn't you say that in the first place?" I exclaimed, completely won over.

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"I kept the best till the last," said Beechey, her face shining.

The next night I was to move in, and the morning after that, at 8.30, Gladys was to be received by Beechey and introduced into the mysteries of making coffee, which my friend contended was best accomplished in a saucepan. All this time I was to be asleep, scarcely awaking as Gladys would creep noiselessly in and start the fire in the drawing-room. Not until the breakfast tray was brought to my bedside by Gladys, with "Good morning, madam," would I luxuriously arouse myself.

My trunks departed identically with the sixteen shillings; the rest of the day was spent in the theater, and at eleven o' night the fireman who was on duty after nine announced that "Mrs. 'Ile's brougham is waiting." That was very satisfactory to Mrs. Wren, and she called so much attention to my departure that the members of the company stuck their heads out of their dressing-room doors and wished they had some rice to throw on me.

I didn't look as though I should have rice, or should have a brougham. All day Beechey had been "telephoning through" to ask if I could manage to secure matches, coffee, hand-towels, eggs, bread, some "cheerful" flowers, and kindling. The stores had not come from the Stores, and the shops were closed Thursday afternoon in Chelsea. Mrs. Wren very wonderfully procured all of these commodities, adding a quartern of gin and a piece of cheese as her contribution to the new house. I went out looking like a war-time Santa Claus, and with ever so big a fear in my heart that the brougham would not let me in it. When I saw it was just a homely old growler,

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with a homely old man driving a horse not proud, nor yet too skinny nor exhausted-looking, I felt relieved. And when the cabby told me that the beast was a war-horse and had just been brought from France, the exaggerated sum I was paying for driving home every night ceased to be an item for vexation. It was nothing more nor less than a horse pension.

I leaned forward in my hard little four-wheeler, as we drove up Pall Mall, and looked through the window-glass, blurred with rain. I let down the window at the left, just as we were passing Marlborough House. Ten years ago, as I drove home over this route, securing one of those new and dangerous taxis if possible, the sentry who stood without the gates was a brilliant target in red. Twenty years ago, during the Boer War, he wore the same gay uniform. Now, as I took this familiar drive homeward, I found a sober creature doing his sentry-go in dull yellow. As we turned into the Mall at St. James's Palace, the silver bell of the clock was striking the quarter, and smartly around the corner marched the guard, on what I presumed to be a tour of inspection, for I met the little company many nights after that, going in and out among the royal palaces. First, an N. C., and directly behind him the officer of the day, wearing the sword which we seldom see now, with three privates behind him, the last one carrying the lantern of Diogenes. All of them going through a formula established by that faint, far arbiter of English fashion—Precedent.

There was still traffic in the Mall. Huge army trucks were taking our route, winding behind Buckingham Palace and halting before a great, thoroughly lighted soldiers' hostel that was, and will be again, a

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splendid hotel when the overseas men have all gone back. These trucks seem to have no homes of their own. I always found lines of them standing through the wet nights, the proud possessors enjoying the cheer inside, as once long lines of limousines waited before the doors for their masters. Only, in this day, it is the chauffeurs who are inside.

Beyond, in Eaton Square, rows of low, beautifully built huts fill the space that was once greensward, and clearly worded directions for the benefit of the soldiers strange to the city are upon illuminated signs at every corner. The homes of the aristocrats look down upon these huts, but not with *hauteur*, for the impression that was strongest with me, even in my first early days here, was the easy merging of the old landscape with the new, as the aristocratic sections extend their welcome to the humbler abodes for the soldiers. I believe that in a country which has never known the traditions of feudalism this gathering of the humble around the seats of the powerful would be not so naturally accepted. That is one for feudalism, and occasionally the war correspondent passes through who reads another brief for it in the contrasting of the care of the English officers for their men as compared to the unintentional indifference of our own officers toward their comrades in the ranks.

At Sloane Square I thrust my head far out of the window, as I thought the crowd collected could not be there save for a fire or a fight. But I had forgotten the lure of the Owl lunch-wagon. The little red-windowed van was a white bark in a khaki sea, and I wondered where all those boys were to sleep, if they could sleep at all after several mugs of coffee. I could not see if they were eating doughnuts, although

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I tried hard to, for Mrs. Wren had told me something that afternoon very lovely about the homely fried cakes, and although it will keep me from my Chelsea domain by a paragraph or two, I must fly off at the usual uncontrolled mental angle and repeat it.

Mrs. Wren has a friend who started one of these Owl wagons at the beginning of the war, with a capital of twenty pounds. Now he would not sell his business for several hundred—for he is rich—like madam. I am not trying to induce you to invest your money in coffee-stalls; the point is that his specialty of late has been doughnuts, and her point is that there is work for all, if the Britisher will only be adaptable.

Mrs. Wren's friend, Mr. Coffee-Stall, told her that a girl came to him one day with a plate of doughnuts, to ask if he would taste them, but he had no chance to taste them, for some colonials seized the plate, crying, "Good old Salvation Army!" In a minute there were only coppers to show for the samples. So Mr. Coffee-Stall went to the girl's house, and found there her father, who had been in the war, and left with a nervous affection of the legs which prevented his going back to his old job of house-painting—or whatever it was that took legs. Then his wife went out charring, and the girl stayed home with the father, who tried to help with the cookery. He worked on doughnuts day and night, for he had eaten those that the Salvation Army distributed at the front; and on the day he had perfectly golden-browned them, as he sat on a high stool by the range, she took them over to the Owl lunch-wagon.

"You know the rest, in the books you have read"—which I should not continue, as I believe it runs:

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"how the British regulars fired—and fled." But, of course, mother, father, and daughter turn out hundreds of doughnuts a day, and wheel father every night to the movies. All of which must be very satisfactory to the possible male reader, as it proves that a man can cook, if he will.

As I had this little résumé of doughnuts, Gladys reverted to my mind, and the home I was coming to, after a long absence from any but borrowed homes, and I determined we would have doughnuts all the time, made only as a soldier's loving daughter would make them. Then we rather suddenly turned into my little square, to stop at my little house, and between the drawn curtains I could catch the flicker of my fire, and once beyond the door I could smell the oil stove "welcoming me in"; but the rooms were steaming warm! Beechey went down into the kitchen, and I heard her say, "Miaow! Miaow!" which made me fear for her reason; but she said she was only scaring off the mice. It was not a wasted effort, as one was found the next morning, stark and cold, probably having laughed himself to death. Pretty soon she returned with some cocoa, which was very thin, as she had followed the directions on the tin.

And soon after that—after she had asked me how the play had got on, and did the audience like the leading man—the gas stove was out, the grate fire softly glowing, and I lay on an excellent bed, looking at the bare branches of the great trees, which a pale, wet moon was permitting me to enjoy. Cora's moon, making her unhappy, no doubt, but illuminating nature for me, which is a very decent use for this torch of love, when one is "going on fifty."

Chapter X

BOOM! And yet not a boom. Bang! And yet not a bang. Iron upon iron, but with no metallic reverberation, the echo only in my frightened brain as I sat up in bed in the gray of the morning light and tried to define the assault. Again it came, and I knew it to be a knock on the knocker of the front door. I don't know how the door felt about it, but it had the effect upon me of a blow; to define the two, a knock-out blow directed at me.

I appreciate now that I should have received the knock-out blow as would a pugilist. I should have fallen straight back upon my pillows and lapsed into unconsciousness. In that fashion I would have demonstrated that I was in no way concerned with the front door and the knocks thereon. That the front door led to the *maisonnette*, but was not the *maisonnette*, and that it was the duty of the landlady, snug and warm with her Pomeranians in the room directly above me. either to answer knocks or to discourage them.

But I can never resist an appeal at a front door. I suppose I was a lackey in some earlier period, for I hastily threw a dressing-gown about me, went to the door and received from the postman a parcel of obviously dying flowers addressed to the lady sleeping above. I put the parcel down on the antique wedding-chest in the hall, and flew back, dressing-gown and

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all, to my cooling bed. I shut my eyes. I put a stocking over them. "You are asleep," I said.

"Blump!" cried a woman's voice down the street. "Blump!" It came nearer. There was a sudden barking. At first it seemed to be the Pomeranians, but, on analysis, it was one large bark rather than two small ones. It was the dog next door protesting at "Blump." Soon the noise came to our door, accompanied by a knock, a different kind of a knock, but just as imperative as the postman's, and, throwing a fur coat over the dressing-gown, I again answered it. There was no one at the door. Nothing but one quart of milk looking up at me boldly (whoever said, "as mild as milk"?), with the milk-girl going her wretched way down the street. Once we had milkmaids in the country and milkmen in the city. Now men look after the cows and girls peddle their commodity; but no matter the sex, the London street-cry of "Blump" continues, horridly corrupted from "Milk below," to add to the horrors of rising. Do you remember in the dead and gone days Trilby and her "Milk below," in the actress's best diction? What if Trilby had made her entrance on the stage with "Blump!" like a trained bullfrog! The play would have been a failure—as life at the *maisonnette* was going to be? I would not admit this.

The milk joined the dead flowers on the chest, and the fur coat, the dressing-gown and myself retired. We filled up the bed. "You are asleep," I again told myself.

"Bing!" at the door, followed by *tat-tat*, then a scuffling sound, as though rats were endeavoring to get through the keyhole. I put the eider-down quilt over the fur coat over the dressing-gown, and went to the door. The paper-boy had gone on to exasperate

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further the dog in the next house, and through the letter-drop had been shot the morning papers. All of us, including the papers, crowded back into my narrow bed. I put the stocking over my eyes. "A *maisonnette* is that portion of a house rented by the householder in order that the tenant may answer the door," I chanted in the fond hope of putting myself to sleep with the idea.

The rage that this thought developed warmed only my head. My feet were freezing, I was too cold to get up and light the oil stove, and the only picture which soothed my mind, and finally sent me off in a doze, was that of Gladys. Gladys, who would soon be deftly laying the fire for me. How Gladys was to get in I did not know or care. I certainly was not going to let her in. That she did force an entrance, I learned later, was due to her arrival at the same time with the landlady's maid. But from that moment on until I first beheld Gladys kneeling at the grate my dozing dreams were perforated by staccato whispers in the hall and thousands of feet going up and down the basement steps.

After the postman, the milk-girl, and the paper-boy made their first senseless attacks upon the door, the knocker was not in evidence until the usual business of life began. Fortunately, business in London is not actually humming and not largely knocking until ten o' the morning.

I removed the stocking from my eyes, when I was sure Gladys was kneeling at the hearth, and elevated myself upon the pillows to greet her. I saw a young head, wearing an evening coiffure, bound low on the brow by a black velvet ribbon. She was singing "Over There."

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"Is that you, Gladys?" I asked by way of greeting, just hoping it might not be.

"Huh?"

"Is this Gladys?" Faintly from me.

"Ung-huh!"

"Very well, then," I returned, firmly, sticking to my original formula. "Good morning, Gladys."

She settled back on her haunches and looked at me, then she candidly gave to an icy world evidence of her first limitation: "I never could build a fire," confessed Gladys.

Myself and wrappings retired under the coverlet for a space, again to emerge, and with a mighty summoning of early Indiana days I arose and showed my handmaiden how to lay the sticks. I also produced the fire-lighter, soaked it in the paraffin, and applied a match. The charm worked. Gladys was yawning at it.

"You need not watch it," I said, for I was proud of the thing. "You can bring up the breakfast."

"Huh?"

"Where did you come from?"

"From Canada, and I wisht to God I was back there."

"So do I." I was very fervent.

She thought I liked Canada, and grew more sociable. "I am going to a dance," banging the coal-scuttle against the Queen Anne furniture.

So far as I was concerned she could have left immediately, but fear of Beechey in the kitchen held me in bounds. "Get the breakfast first."

"All rightee." She made her exit.

After a while the coffee came up, Beechey just behind it, beaming at me. "She's splendid," whis-

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pered Beechey. Then I appreciated what I should have known before: that my friend will never see straight, and that she will never suffer greatly from the annoyances of life because of this. That quality is the real "treasure of the humble." If a thing is hers it is all right. It is all right because it is hers, and Gladys was hers.

We had a few days of horrible cooking and worse service before I returned to the registry to report on the lemon-grove for which I had paid a half-crown and a twenty-shilling fee besides. This was done by stealth, for Beechey implored me not to let the girl go until we were sure of some one to take her place. At least she could carry the coal, sweep and dust, after a fashion, and do up the dishes at night before going out to her evening dance. That is, she would do them up if Beechey kept her eye on her—I having departed to the theater—but she never went through a motion in the kitchen that could be avoided, although I suppose if a pedometer were strapped to her body one would learn that at least five miles of lost motions in jazz steps were recorded every night.

Yet I do not regret the experience with this problem in economics which Great Britain has for the moment to deal with. For the first two years of the war the fighting colonials were allowed to bring their families over. So the father of Gladys, a man nearing fifty, and probably of not much use as a warrior, came across, and with him, or after him (in hot pursuit, I imagine), came the useless mother and six children. Three of the children were so young they had to go to school; of the other three one went into the Land Army, and two into service, or such service as they could secure, for they had never been taught any-

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thing remotely relating to usefulness of any kind. I could not imagine from what stratum of life they came, until my landlady told me that Gladys told her she also was an actress. Then I knew that she belonged to that mean type who hang about the theaters in America in the capacity of supers. I have never known one who had an ounce of real worth in her make-up.

That she and her sister ever went into service at all was because they were starved into it. The glorious color which had so impressed Beechey naturally would impress her, for it was paint. When once besought to rub it off, she did so—for the moment—and presented to us a hollow-eyed, gray-faced girl who, as she argued, would never get a job, much less hold it. She knew she was rotten—that was one of her charms—but her indifference to adopting methods that might make her of value rendered this charm evanescent.

While she was exceptionally inadequate, she is one of the thousands of girls of the same estate in America. They are not brought up with the idea of going into service, therefore they learn nothing of housekeeping, and the net they prepare for the ensnaring of a husband is seldom stronger than a hair-net decorated with ribbon. It was with a deep, burning shame that I, who had come away to escape Cora's tales of love, should be dangling possibilities of a successful catch before the girl if she would learn from Beechey something of cookery. To be sure, most of the dishes Beechey knew she prepared in a chafing-dish, but they could just as palatably and much more easily have been done on a range. "I ain't a-goin' to cook forever," was our maid's hopeless reply. And while I might have responded that she was not a-goin' to

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cook for us as soon as we could better our condition, I did not presume to be saucy until the dream became a business.

This looking forward to marriage and an immediate hired girl of her own is not the evil of England, but that of my country, where we are all ladies, or expect to be—therefore never cook. And it has little to do with this story beyond, as I have said, that there are hundreds of just such girls now in England, eating food and disseminating their “just-as-good-as-you-and-a-little-bit-better” notions without any evidence that they are good for anything beyond a good time. These girls now want to go back; they are cold and underfed. As Gladys herself said, “I’ll cut my throat if I gotta stick it,” but the steamer passage is now too high, and the British government does not appreciate that dipping into their treasury and sending them home might bring a greater return to the nation than the monetary expenditure would mean a loss.

We kept Gladys on from day to day for several reasons. One was that we couldn’t do better, another that her father was a soldier, another that Beechey’s life was one continual triumph of hope over experience, and the last that Gladys had turned her bedroom into a bower of beauty with a sad little view to remaining permanently.

She undoubtedly liked her place, and we thought at times she might make an effort to earn the money I was expending upon her. But her efforts were ever limited to personal adornment, at its best at a dance, and sadly out of place in a kitchen. She did the entire embellishing of her own room. The piece of carpet to stand upon was never brought down from the landlady’s stores, and no bit of cracked mirror was ever

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supplied. I myself brought home a dressing-room mirror and took a useless rug from my bedroom to place at her wash-stand. But the landlady, who, if she had not been a lady, I would say snooped, brought it up-stairs again. And my curiosity was so great to see when she would really look after a servant's comfort that I made no further effort toward exacting it from her.

Yet, snooping myself one day, I found the room hung with pennants on which were lettered the names of Canadian towns Gladys might have passed through *en auto*, or might (mightier, in fact) have bought in a Toronto five-and-ten-cent store. There were bits of cretonne cushioning, picture post-cards of lovers, artificial flowers and cracked mugs, and a shell from Catalina Island. It made me sigh to step from that room, in which she took so much pride, into the filthy kitchen which also belonged to her. The kitchen had pretty blue-check curtains at the window. It had a high mantel-shelf, with old copper jars on it which would have shone with beauty if polished. The long dresser of dishes was attractive, and the whole would have presented a pleasant room to learn to be a good wife in if it had been looked upon as anything but a prison cell.

One of our guests at one of Beechey's luncheons commented with aptness upon this discrimination of Gladys between beauty that had to do with her and that which pertained to hated service. Beechey burst into luncheons as soon as my trunks were unpacked and the sparse linen purchased. She sweetly wished to share her friends with me, and she had every reason to be proud of them. It is one of the charming traits of the English that, no matter how poor you are, if

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they like you they will come any distance, climb any number of stairs to see you, and they will invite you to their houses, no matter how shabby you are, to meet their very best-dressed acquaintances. If they smiled at Beechey they smiled indulgently, and never seemed to show the social exhaustion I felt at the close of a luncheon which was to have been served at one and came staggering up on a tray at two.

Naturally, I would be the more exhausted, as it was my *maisonnette*, and I had to struggle with the added responsibility of making conversation with strangers (while Beechey directed below-stairs) and trying to remember the hyphenated names. It was of no assistance to me that I knew their husbands' names. I would have to know their father's name as well, or their mother's name, or some family name that they sought to keep green by placing it just before the last, or one of the last, of their husbands' names. And to this day I don't know whether I should address them by the last name or the whole combination, or, as they seem to (playfully), drop the last altogether and concentrate on the first in the arrangement. We Americans have one advantage—two, in truth—we can do anything wrong and not be thought any more dreadful than usual, and we can always commence a conversation with "Say." As I grow older I stick more and more firmly to being an American, and I frequently say-ed these pleasant women.

I remember it was one of them (she knew everything and everybody and was writing a book about those things she knew which could decently be put down in a book) who, with an author's eye, watched Gladys as she recklessly served the delayed luncheon. When it would seem that she had permanently with-

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drawn the guest dared to comment upon the appearance of our general, or rather, to respond to my own *coup d'œil* and my whispered, "Did you see her apron?"

"Yes, and I saw her hair," the guest replied.

Gladys, although provided with aprons by me, had on as filthy a one as I have ever met. But her hair was coiffed, and the black-velvet ribbon lower than ever on her forehead. Cap? Well, rather not. Canada?

"What intrigues me," continued the hyphenated lady who bore the name of her first and third husband, "is her vast interest in her hair and her indifference to the apron. She is wearing it. It is part of her."

"It isn't part of her," spoke up another woman. "That's just it. It's part of Mrs. Closser-Hale" (they hyphenate me over here—do it firmly; protest is useless), "and she doesn't take any interest in it at all."

"But she would look smarter, I dare say she would be prettier if her apron was nicer," continued another one of these amazing people. Not that I discouraged their frankness. I was grateful for this impersonal view, their criticism in no way including me. I felt no responsibility for our servant. As the woman said of her husband, "Thank God we are no blood-relation."

"It's a badge of servitude, an apron. They have that in their heads, and if they can discredit it they will do so. My maids won't step to the corner with their caps on any more."

We talk of servants still in America, but long ago they stopped this in England—and now they have begun again. So, after all, it was not because it was

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low to talk of servants, but for the reason that it was not, really, part of the issue of living. But it is very much part of the present issue, and I find that the great ladies over here enjoy it as much as the Dorcas Society does in an Idaho village. I sat forward, for I wished to get into the talk again, if only as a member of the Dorcas Society. "Why won't they wear their caps?" I asked.

"I wanted to know that, too. Bowen—that's my parlor-maid—said she would lose her chances."

"Chances for what?"

"Chances to get married, of course. Possibly to the ironmonger's son near by, or some one who is in trade."

My brain whirled. "Then this scarcity of servants can be traced back to mere sex," I shouted.

"*Mere sex!*" laughed the lady with the names of two husbands and who was writing a book about them.

They all looked at me, and there fell one of those embarrassing British pauses which I have learned are embarrassing only to the American. We fly into words to fill it, saying nothing, while they are just leisurely thinking things over. My words flew about wildly, but they were not as senseless as they appeared on the surface:

"I didn't come over for this!"

Then they all laughed, because when in doubt it is safe to show appreciation of what Americans say. The chances are we are trying to have our little joke.

After they had left, I, falsely pretending I was going to take a walk that I might look at the tablets and the tombs, which always delights Beechey, flew up to the registry. The blonde was not at all glad to see me, as she had my money and no more servants,

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but since those conditions endured I thought the least she could do was to talk to me.

"Oh, they will go back into service," she said, crossly. She was always cross with me, after I had paid my fee, but then she had many Gladii to contend with throughout the day and I had only one. "But they won't as long as they can draw the out-of-work donation."

"Out-of-work donation?" I echoed, respectfully.

"Yes, madam," banging desk drawers full of names of cooks who wouldn't cook. "The government donation. Domestic servants went into munitions, motor-driving, into the Land Army, into all sorts of high-paying positions during the war. And with the money they bought gramophones and fur coats and lessons in jazzing, and when the war suddenly ended, the government, out of recognition of their services, arranged to pay these workers four-and-twenty shillings a week for fourteen weeks, or until they could find work at their old pursuits. The same thing held good for the men. You should see them on Fridays, drawing their money—silver queues, they are called."

"Can't they find work?"

"Most of them can, but they won't look for it until the donation ceases."

"I thought they went into war-work for patriotic reasons," I said, bluntly.

"Did they in the States?"

"No," I admitted. "They took the job because the pay was higher."

"So they did over here—don't let us deceive ourselves. The ladies of the upper classes worked for patriotic reasons, or for excitement, or to get away

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from their homes. But to thousands of our women it has been one huge holiday. Gramophones and fur coats!"

I could not respond to her impatience over the music-boxes and the warm wraps. There was something pathetic to me in these first purchases made by girls who lived in carpetless basement rooms, with no music for them save from the pianos of their betters above, and never entirely warm when out in the raw air, until the war and its vast emoluments made fur coats possible. Many of them have no longer these treasures in their possession. In the north of England the pawnshops bear placards in the windows that no more fur coats will be accepted, and gramophones bring only a few shillings.

Even as I now write they are returning, sour-faced, to do domestic service. Some depended upon the out-of-work employment donation as long as possible, making any excuse to avoid accepting a position, that they might continue their glorious playing. Some work and also accept the dole of a too generous government staggering under sickening financial burdens, and these, when discovered, are fined or imprisoned. The taxpayer howls through the columns of the press, and when one workman was recorded as having driven up in a taxi—and kept it—while waiting for his non-employment benefit, I myself, as a prospective sufferer from the income tax, drafted a letter.

The sister of Gladys, who worked in the Land Army, was drawing an out-of-employment donation, and refusing to live at home or contribute to her mother's support so long as the twenty-four shillings weekly was paid her. Gladys herself said it was "fierce to

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take money one didn't earn, but that it was awful hard to go back to a kitchen."

"But if it's a nice kitchen?"

This was false in me, for I don't think any kitchen is really very nice, except to learn to be a good wife in. And this sympathizing with one side and then with the other is going to end in a very bad book, with no proper deductions drawn, and the reader left all up in the air—with me—and the rest of the world. Gladys forbore to comment on kitchens: "'Tain't that. You can't get in the right set if you're working private. When you're in a factory you go in a good set. An N. C. O., even a private, won't look at a hired girl if he can get somebody working—say, in a candy-factory. I was in a chocolate-factory onct, and was in a dandy crowd."

"Why didn't you stay in the factory?" I suddenly prodded.

She evaded the question. Of course she had lost her job—incapable, as ever. So I continued: "What difference does it make whether you're in a candy-shop or a kitchen? You're the same girl."

Gladys was standing by the table, eating the crumbs on the cloth in lieu of brushing them up. "You're the same girl all right, but we 'ain't got no standing. Kitchen-work 's work in a kitchen, and a factory job is a business."

She went out, catching her apron on the door-knob, uttering a "Damn!" and dropping my minute ration of butter on the floor. But I didn't care. She had hit it. Any work on top of earth is looked upon as a business except domestic service, and until that time comes when it will be a business, women of to-day, tortured by the wave of feminine unrest that has

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come sweeping over us, will avoid it. If we could make the world over, and sponge from the brain all meaning of the word "service" save its most beautiful significance, the intelligent girl who has a special aptitude for housework (and I still think this type predominant) will continue to strive for a place in some black factory by day to earn a blacker hole to sleep in by night. And she is unhappily right, for this poor striving is but her way of maintaining her self-respect. She will no longer be a serf.

Good comes out of evil. This alarming refusal to return to domestic service now that the necessary curtailment of the personnel of English houses, great and small, has lessened, has caused the sober-minded men and women of Great Britain to treat with the domestic problem as thoughtfully as with the other huge labor conditions which have ever confronted them. Scared into it, as I have said, but, at any rate, really endeavoring to recognize menial work as a business. But the point is they do not call it a business. They still call it domestic service.

Some committees have made no wiser concessions than the adoption of a handle to the names of their employees. Others, however, are arranging with them hours for work as definite as those in a factory. Hostels are being established that they may not "live in" if they do not want to; uniforms are taking the place of caps and aprons. Maids are sent in by the hour, at tenpence—twenty cents—an hour, and at Highgate a club has been opened which all of England is watching. I know the woman who started this club, and how she has planned it for years. It is amusing that she has accomplished at Highgate what

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I suggested at Kennebunkport, Maine, and was sneered at for my efforts.

But all women of all countries must have discovered by now that, in the new order of things in this world, they must put others at ease if they mean to be at ease themselves. For I believe this rebellion would have come among domestics even had there been no world-embroilment, but the war brought to them—as well as deep grief and quickly forgotten losses—a period when they were just as good as anybody, and they are loath to return to a condition undeniably held in poor esteem by their fellow-creatures.

And now I am covered with confusion, for the writing down of “fellow-creatures” is a confession that this whole servant question is entirely in the hands of the masculine sex; it could be disposed of by the sturdy insistence of a man when he marries his wife that she must have domestic training as well as a pink bow in her hair. There are schools now for domestic science where a girl could learn her trade—her business—as she could never acquire it in the mean home of her father. Mrs. Whitelaw Reid has established one of these schools over here, and has found that the girl of the East End is just as willing to be clean and do things beautifully in a kitchen as to be a slattern and do them grubbily. *But* her chances for marriage are not so good to a man of decent estate when she smiles up from the kitchen area (in a cap worn for the very decent reason of keeping her hair out of the food) as when she lolls from her father’s sagging window, unhappy and unkempt, in the Mile End Road.

When there is a demand there will be a supply. And if men preferred a good housekeeper to a pink

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bow, they would get it. A girl would go into a kitchen (if for no finer reason than to practise on somebody else's eggs with her new cookery recipes before she marries) if the man of the present day would let out a reef in his furred-up brain and admit that "labor, all labor is noble and holy." But he, too, feels the ignominy of personal service. The shadow of serfdom, faint though it may be, still renders the employee within a household a baser creature than the employee of a factory.

Just at present, as I have outlined before, we are in the worst stage of all, for the English servant will not work for those who aren't kind to her, yet despises those whose sway is gentle. I wish a woman's brain could be entirely taken apart, like a watch, thoroughly cleaned, and the good little jewels of the works set to gleaming again. I wish I were wise enough to do it. But there! I can't clean a watch, much less a girl's brain.

So far I have terribly muddled it. My landlady is out a very good maid for the present of four shillings from me. In my quaint desire to be loved, which I find expressed in the last chapter of my diary, I gave her this money, and as it was just one dollar more than she had calculated on to eke out her scanty existence she decided to dispose of the vexatious sum as soon as the nearest pub was open. It opened at twelve, and she fled—but to return. To return and create a mild scene by standing in front of my window and railing at me for "swanking about with my money."

It was very "tiresome" to my landlady, who had found her a good servant up to the dollar spree, and it was very embarrassing to me, as I feared the girl

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had lost her place. If a maid drinks in America, out she goes, but my landlady had no thought of dismissing her. The patient householder is accustomed to half-pint sprees, if not to two-quart ones, and we saw the maid no more because some other anxious housewife snatched her up, profiting, no doubt, by the enervation following the party.

"It doesn't do to be too nice to them," said my landlady, which showed a great deal of restraint. "Now, about this mousetrap—" But I continued silently mutinous as she explained the vagaries of the mousetrap. It is the last clutch of the feudal system—this control by fear. The servant still vaguely recognizes it, even as she resents the system—it keeps what poor wits she exercises under the ordered sway which we all need to preserve our balance. But it clamps down the best of her, for the overlord of old was intent only upon the discipline that brought immediate results to him. Planning a future for his vassals was never one of the aims of the baron.

As I say, to all intent I was confining my attention to the mousetrap furnished by the landlady. With the coming of Gladys we had grown even more popular with rodents in our neighborhood. Word went round among the mice that two Americans and a Canadian were living up the street, and that what the Americans didn't eat above-stairs the Canadian left on the floor below-stairs as she hurried out to her evening jazz. Properly speaking, it was not a mousetrap. But the landlady, with that curious attention to pennies and indifference to pounds which marks the aristocrat who goes into business, had it stored among her effects and thought it might be used. It was really a rat-trap, a very large one, and if a mouse once moved into

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it, the little creature could roam very comfortably through its long galleries for the rest of its life, and make itself a decent home. If bored, Mr. Mouse need not trouble to go out the main entrance, but could exit between the wires, which were wide enough to accommodate his little body at any point.

Yet it was brought to us to catch mice in, and we were besought, if we did catch one, not to kill the little thing, but to carry the trap and all over to Battersea Park, a distance of about a mile, and let it out. She had tried it herself with a string bag, but, curiously enough, there was no mouse upon her arrival. Yet this was the lady who would not furnish me with a scrap of carpet for my maid's room!

Now who is to solve the servant question over here, when no one has begun to solve the mysteries of the mistress who engages the servant?

Chapter XI

OTHER engaging things happened besides the engaging of Gladys during the first weeks of our tenancy of the *maisonnette*. And a certain order came into our lives which gave time for pleasanter pursuits than the eternal quest for matches or firewood.

Having successfully grappled with the heating question, I grew ambitious for undisturbed mornings. It seemed that the milk-girl, the paper-boy, and the postman always had knocked on the door on their early-morning rounds, and, as far as I can make out, the tenant of the ground floor always answered the knocks. But I saw no reason why they always should because they always had, and before retiring each night I hung upon the knocker a neatly lettered sign with "Please" (we always say "please" over here) "to ring only the area-bell until nine in the morning."

It was an amazing procedure, and if I chanced to waken early, anyway, I could hear the cessation of footsteps outside as the possessors of the feet stopped to read the card. But the scheme worked, although other knockers were more bitterly attacked to make up for this restraint, and the dog next door barked his usual protest.

The dog must have slept in the lower hall, with the wall between us, and I could not bring myself to com-

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plain of him for fear he would be consigned to the basement, where he would get rheumatism, along with the maid. He didn't have a very good time of it, anyway, that doggie. It got about, the way things do in this little village of London, that he was not fed as much as he should be, since dog-biscuits had gone up, and my landlady was often seen stretching her long, fine arm over the garden wall to drop him satisfying bones.

My landlady co-operated with me in my efforts toward a peaceful morning. She was pleasantly anxious that a stranger to her country should be comfortable, even though the householder had to suffer placards on the door, and I think she would have preferred amending the notice to, "Please, an American begs you to ring only the area-bell. . . ." so as to have explained the unusualness of the act.

She often came in the morning, after her setting-up exercises at the telephone consisting of vocal calisthenics and a strain on the nerves which could be translated as an endurance test. The telephone was in the hall outside my door, and one would have thought it was a real gymnasium, with the landlady as instructor on the high rings, to judge by her pinched Oxford tones imploring some one to hold on.

It was impossible not to hear these piercing one-sided conversations, although when her companion at the other end of the 'phone was evidently growing excited, she would remind her to speak low, as Mrs. Hale was sleeping. Yet in this way I learned many things of her goodness, of which she never spoke, for the English do not talk of their fine deeds. One was that she had been enormously active in gratuitous hospital work. And I liked her all the better for taking

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on the unromantic job—she had been the barber. She had a real concern and love for the Tommies—yet they must remain Tommies. She was reporting to some friend, one morning, of another friend who had decided to take as “paying guests” a few officers still weak from wounds. “Of course, only nice men,” she told her over the ‘phone; “none of those counter-jumpers who went out as officers.” It makes one wonder as to the ultimate fate of those little fellows who, in the exigencies of war, and their own ability, were made into what they call over here “a temporary gentleman.” Although the Labor party is in, the Conservative out, the last crust to be broken through will be that of caste in England, I imagine. But what a seething mass of flame will burst when this artificial covering is finally pierced!

In our morning talks following the telephonic period my landlady always left the hall door wide open, and as the one leading into the garden was rarely closed, except when I was leaning against it, my elaborately heated rooms were as icy as charity before our conversation was concluded. But on one especial morning there was so much excitement in the hall over the knocker subject that I opened the door myself, and kept at bay the cold by a participation in a heated discussion over what was to be done and how to do it. Although our back door is never locked, and thieves can, and have passed over garden walls into whole rows of houses, our front door is never left on the latch for a minute. Nor are keys delivered over to strange servants without a suspicion that duplicates will be made and the house robbed—decently, by the front door, as it should be in Chelsea.

I don't know how long we must know a servant

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before she can be trusted with a key, but the new maid who had taken the place of the bewildered creature I drove to drink by the gift of four shillings had not yet arrived at that stage of trust, and, in order to avoid knocking, our householder admitted making an arrangement with her which got no farther than the first attempt. She would not give the maid a key, nor would she leave the door on the latch, nor would she have me aroused, so she placed the key in a piece of white paper in the boot-scraper, and hung a card above my card. Hers read, "Mary, find the key and come in." Strange as it may seem, this game of hide-and-seek had appealed to earlier birds than Mary, and when the rightful participator in the morning's fun arrived, the worm had been found and carried off. The landlady agreed with me that it was very unsportsman-like if the thief's name was not Mary, but she failed to get the unalloyed joy out of the situation which was mine.

"The lock must be changed—we'll be robbed," she ejaculated.

"We'll be robbed, anyway, if we go on leaving the back door open all night," I argued. "Personally, I'd rather they would come through the hall than the bath-room. It's more respectable."

"It's not respectable for them to come through either door," she commented, shortly.

She had me there. Burglars are not classed among the eligible, and I endeavored to soothe her. If it was a burglar who found the key, he would have come in immediately, for one of his trade knew that locks could be changed in a day.

"In a day?" she echoed. "It will take a week."

And so it did. With the ancient wedding-chest

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pushed across the front door by the last one in, which was Gladys, until a British workman had been found and demobbed and importuned and overpaid, and new keys were made for us along with a new lock. That night Beechey rode down on 11 bus to watch the leading man go through his big scene and to ride home with me in the growler. Her mousey eyes were dancing.

"Do you know what she wants to do now?" I didn't. "She wants to tie the key on a string, then tie the string to the knocker, and drop the key through the slot for letters. So that Mary, and only Mary, can pull it outside from the inside. Did you ever?"

No, I never.

If I thought the landlady strange, she thought me stranger, and yet she was more generous than I at this present moment. As I grew more and more fond of her, I continued hostile to her methods, whereas she, with less natural flexibility than my pioneer birth has granted me, managed to accept, even to applaud, my innovations. "You're all so clever," she once said; "that's the reason we're afraid of you." Which, of course, was amazing to me, as the Americans are afraid of the English, probably not because they are clever, but for the consciousness that they have had at least a thousand more years than we have had for the application of knowledge, and with it manners and all the charming graces that our rawer land lacks.

Yet, like the theater-housekeeper who preferred the newspaper blower to a fire-lighter, she had no intention of adopting these innovations. They belonged to a younger people, and she must go on her prescribed way.

She even grew in time to admire my clothes-horse. The clothes-horse was purchased as I had but six

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hooks screwed beneath a shelf in the living-room for my entire wardrobe. Having come from a country which is supposed to have profited largely by the war, I had more gowns and many more coats than the lady in the villa whom—in the sixth chapter—I endeavored to coerce into sleeping in her drawing-room. Indeed, I had more clothes than usual, as I was supplied with the cast-off garments of my friends while I myself worked for the war, and I may add here that it was not a bad scheme.

There was no use appealing to my landlady. She would say, "You wouldn't want any more hooks, would you?" And I would either answer, "No," or snap at her. The conversation of the American is made up of extremes. The expense of buying household necessities for a home that was supposed to be furnished was already so great that I did not burst into the purchase of a wardrobe, although I visited many shops with the idea of securing a lowly old-fashioned hat-rack or hall-stand, or some effect which would hold dress-hangers.

Of course, I would not tell the clerk what I wanted the hat-rack for; he would not sell it to me if I was not going to use it for hats. I had learned this by venturing into an antique-shop with a view to purchasing a brass fire-screen. It consisted of a base something like a hat-tree and a strong crosspiece on which I could have hung any amount of gowns. I had just been complimented by the landlady on my inventiveness, or I would not have told the antiquity-man, full of antique thoughts, what I was going to do with the fire-screen. He said it would never answer, and while I contended that it would, wishing to show him with my coat—and his—he remembered that it

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had been already sold as a fire-screen—the which it was—and bowed me out. I wanted to go back and ask him if I kept it before the fire, and used my clothes for a screen, could I have it. But I was afraid of him.

Even archaic old hat-racks were prohibitive in the shops; England has no pine forest to draw upon for cheap furniture, and not a stick of household ware was made during the war. I don't see how any young couple, provided they can find a home, dare equip it, for above all high prices at present furniture shows the greatest increase. Should they find a home, they must under no circumstances have a baby. The meanest cradle in the meanest shop I visited cost thirty dollars, and it is small wonder that the cockney is undersized, since I am told they are brought up in bureau drawers.

All dealers in antique-shops were not severe with me. One pleasant gentleman sold me a brass kettle instead of the hat-rack for which I was searching, engaging me the while by his stories as a special constable during the war. And it was worth a brass kettle, for I had been wondering at these little copper devices which middle-aged shopkeepers affect on their left lapel. Indeed a man looks but half clad who goes about the streets of London without some kind of emblem upon his breast. This was the old man who suggested screwing hooks in the back of my bed, as my landlady would probably not discover them until after my departure. I told him he didn't know my landlady, and he laughed, saying I would be sure to find some American way of taking advantage of her, which was no doubt kindly meant. He understood Americans very well, he told me, as he had a wife living in Seattle. And the only thing I could not

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understand was any wife living in Seattle with such a pleasant husband living in London. It reminds me vaguely of the New York woman cutting a wide swath in London, who told me she had moved there to be nearer her husband. "And where is your husband?" I asked.

"Hongkong," she replied.

Encouraged by his sympathy, I went to the American shop and bought there a five-foot, twofold pine clothes-horse, some hooks to screw into the cross-pieces, and sent the treasures to the *maisonnette*. And I arrived home just in time, the next afternoon, to keep my landlady from despatching the horse to the kitchen. Even then she did not think the kitchen was the place for the horse, not that she preferred a stable for it, but that laundry is never done in the house. Clothes go off and get themselves washed in some unspeakable place, and we wear them next to our skin as we read articles at clubs on hygiene in the home.

She was not much more relieved when I led the animal from the sitting-room into the bedroom, and her eyebrow never came down until she was invited in to see the clothes-horse, to all appearances a cretonne-covered screen around my dressing-table, with garments hanging on the inside of the fold, obscured to all but me. In the hope that she would emulate me, for she was providing other *maisonnettes*, I pretended I had read of the idea in my English morning paper, but I never deceived her for a moment.

I began the day with leisured enjoyment of my newspaper, for there I found the chronicled events of the day before at which I had expected to be an onlooker, but had let the occasion slip by, and the

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promised excitements of the day to come, which I also expected to participate in—as I sipped my coffee. At first, better to learn of the pageants which I ought to attend, I took in a large, unwieldy paper, difficult to read in bed, and undoubtedly proportioned for the conservative class who ate their breakfast at a table. It was full of court doings, the edge of which is always open to the public, curbstone participators, yet I discontinued the journal on that day a correctly framed advertisement of a drawing-room entertainment offered in its columns “laughter with propriety.” I felt hedged in by this suggestion, and I since have had recourse to a smaller sheet, evidently designed for a single bed.

You will observe I say, “discontinued the paper,” whereas a short time ago I would have said “stopped” it. I must be feeling the influence of a little lord of fourteen who shares with me the same dentist. Teeth have an outrageous trick of going back on you in London, and it is probably arranged by the government, anxious to have you leave vast sums in their country. The little lord and I were both waiting in the anteroom of back *Punches*. No, it was not a pugilistic ring. I should say “full of back numbers of *Punch*.” And I was eying him with a great deal of interest not only because he was a lord talking to his aunt, who was a duchess, but in the hope of discovering some reason why an American boy and an English boy, both with the same number of legs and noses, and general proclivities, should be so absolutely different. This nice little fellow, tapping his stick against his boot as he talked, no doubt had a sense of fun, just as the American boy has. They wear pretty much the same kind of clothes (barring the stick),

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certainly read the same books, and fall in love with the same kind of girls, but here he was using a stilted language which would make an American boy, in no way more of a boy than he, want to fight him.

It was this little chap who had found *Punch* a bit of a bore of late, and had "discontinued" it. He had not stopped it; he was wonderfully and spontaneously correct in his speech. And that very thing may be the difference. We have to achieve form—they start out with it. That may be the reason I see very little difference between the well-bred grown-up in America and over here. After a quarter of a century, the young Englishman begins to take on a cosmopolitanism; his insularities are merged into newer attitudes of life, just as the American tones himself down by absorbing into his eager nature the poise of the older civilizations with which he has come in contact.

If I thought the little lord was funny, he must have been more amused by my companion, who was our comedian, dragged there by me to have an aching tooth assuaged. As an emergency case he was sent ahead, yet would have remained continuing to suffer when his summons came. "It's all very well for you," he said, with a belligerent air to the entire waiting-room, as I endeavored to prod him through the door; "you've been here before, but I've never had a dentist in my mouth!" At twenty-five and over the American and Englishman would have smiled. The American boy would have guffawed. But the little lord held himself politely in.

Even if there were no small peer to engage me, I found in the official program for the day enough to keep me running from one point to another, and then miss half the show. For the longer the stranger re-

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mains the more he appreciates that London is one great pageant, and that the patient sightseer need never grow weary. I say patient, for if you are an onlooker you must wait. Americans are not good waiters, but the English still have the calm faculty of standing still to watch the world go by.

I had thought that the enormous activities of the war, in which every one was concerned, would cause a flagging of devotion to somebody else's social triumphs, but again the crowds are forming outside St. Margaret's Church when a famous beauty marries; again they line up when the Prince of Wales goes to the city to become a Fishmonger; again they stand to watch other people's horses cantering up and down the Rotten Row in Hyde Park.

Little children of the rich who ride on small ponies, attended by careful grooms or red-faced mothers, have strange company these days, such as their forbears never reckoned on. Australians with tufted ostrich feathers in their broad hats slouch low in their saddles on lean mounts. Americans ride by with loose lines, and leave their horses tethered by the inverting of the reins over the beasts' heads, while they talk to pretty ladies in the park. Along the East Drive huge army trucks are allowed to pound where once only private carriages made their way—the hacking vehicles still denied that aristocratic course. Girls occasionally drive these trucks, as they drive the big limousines for the army. You can tell the estate of the chauffeuse by means of the quality of the fur on her khaki overcoat, yet she just as cheerily takes orders. One, I admit, was whistling while her chief was directing her. Then she looked at him and smiled as she closed the limousine door. From him there was

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the faintest softening of his face, and again I was humbled, for the war has created fierce appetites and I know now that I cannot run away from them.

Nor will these women with the rich fur on their collars return easily to the early existence controlled by Victorian precedent. I was passing a house in Park Lane the other day. An august lady was getting into a car, while the daughter of the lady, once more in "civies," motioned to the chauffeur to give his place to her. "Oh, I say, Taddy, I wouldn't," protested the *grande dame*. "Stuff!" returned the daughter, and sat in the driver's seat, while mother within the limousine wondered what they were all coming to.

They are coming to some hard times before the women war-workers of good estate are disposed of. The young woman of birth has rejoiced in her freedom, and is loath to give up what job she can hold. One would have thought that with all those graves in Flanders, there might now be work for all, but it would take more than a million dead to create sufficient vacancies for overcrowded England. In an excerpt from my morning paper I note that in certain departments an appeal was made to married women to give way to unmarried women in need of clerkships, and at Woolwich Arsenal between two and three thousand women not actually dependent upon their earnings immediately gave place; yet on the other hand, at a very large factory full of women not in real need there was no response whatever. And now the papers are full of the cries of men who find their old jobs usurped by women. "Doing better work," their bosses say. "Working for less money," they do not add. It makes one very sad, for it would

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seem that the war is by no means over; only the opponents are different.

Just as an army truck going down the King's Drive creates no excitement, so does a body of Household Guards in glittering uniform, on black horses, but mildly attract. The Tommy in hospital-blue and the soldier not yet demobbed, who loiter in the park, are inclined to sneer at the trappings. Although they line up for royalties and brilliant evidences of a monarchical government, they do not receive the old order of things with awe.

The King and Queen, and Queen of Rumania came to our play early in our season, and there was much more stir among the American actors than there was in the British audience. The royal entrance is up a side-street, next to our stage-door, and all the afternoon during our *matinée* there was an industrious cleaning of the royal reception-room, which leads from the door to the box, a letting down of the awning, and an unrolling of the red carpet (I wonder why it is always of that hue? Think of a lifetime of stepping on turkey-red, if you didn't like the color). Mrs. Wren had my laces reeking in gasoline, and looked upon it as nothing less than the hand of God that waved my hair that morning.

Having played before royalty years ago, I counseled the company to feel no disappointment if the house did not laugh as much as usual. They would be watching their rulers, but I was wrong—again. The audience paid no attention to their sovereigns from the time they promptly seated themselves to that moment when they took their departure to the tune of the national air. And the play never went better. Since then the awning has been let down

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many times over the entrance, for royalties have come again and again, and the little princes have bought seats and sat in the stalls. For a while we peeped through the stage-door to watch their departure, but on the night I discovered one of the older princesses without a self-starter to her car my interest waned, and in time the exhortation from the management not to look toward the royal box was idle, for we forgot their presence.

The English royalties can teach the average theater-goer a lesson, however. Like the pit (the plain people), they come on time. With a full program before them every day, they keep their appointments to the minute, and while the tragedies of the war—the snapped relationship between kin, the assassinated cousins—have made them careworn in appearance, they keep smiling.

Possibly one of the greatest indications of the appreciation of the unrest among their subjects is the endless visiting of the sovereigns upon their humble people. "Surprise visits" they are called, a form of pleasantries which, personally, I could do without. One day is for babies, one day for an inspection of mean housing, one for feverish miners, one for resentful colonials, and always, always the hospitals for the wounded. The people's respect for royalty and their indifference to it is curiously blended. They admire—and make a joke of their admiration. On the night of the attendance of the King and Queen at our theater I overheard one of the stage-hands speaking to another. They had both been inspecting their majesties through the curtain.

"She looks well, Bill," said one.

"She do look well," agreed Bill. Then, as though

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ashamed of his enthusiasm, "But she didn't come for my washing this week!"

While the passing show is for any one who will wait to see it, we of our company are a faint part of the procession itself, for every night there come to our greenroom the American war correspondents passing through the city, Red Cross dignitaries, or our soldiers sent over from the Continent on various missions. They are not all officers. Privates fill the room, homesick boys waiting for news of their folks, girl-entertainers straight from Coblenz, with the experiences that would fill volumes if they knew how to write them down. Between scenes of our little war play on the stage we snatch a moment to ask of the greater drama in which they have played, while the call-boy listens for our cue to take us back to oft-repeated, higher-sounding phrases than these real participators ever uttered.

One night a woman correspondent was allowed to slip into the entrance where the understudies sit. (It is the O. P. side, which, being interpreted, means Opposite Prompt.) And she was good enough to cry over my nightly lament for my dead soldier son. Yet she had seen many boys really die, and was carrying in her hands at that moment her helmet, scarred by the shrapnel marks from a hundred times under fire. I cannot for the life of me understand how a war drama can interest an individual who has known the real theater of war. It must be that reproduction in art does not pass unheeded, even though the audience is unaware of its appreciation of it. It must be, although frequently disputed, that acting is really artistry.

But, while this may explain their interest in the

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war drama, it does not make clear why thousands should flock to that great auditorium, Olympia, to see a sham battle which has lately been engaging the attention of London. For four years England has heard the faint roar of real guns. No detonation has come to their ears which has not carried with it destruction to some British household. No spectator goes to Olympia who has not in some way been affected by the war, yet they fill the benches to witness this child's play of taking mimic trenches.

And they will talk of the show at Olympia when they will not talk of actual battling. One does not dine nor lunch nor tea in England now without the presence of at least one soldier, yet I have never heard a man touch upon his experiences. I don't know how he can avoid them, when for years he has had little else for a topic. An actor will necessarily say, in the recounting of a story having to do with himself, "I was playing that season in So-and-so—and a rotten part it was, too!" But these young men with decorations on their breasts do not say, "When I was at Vimy Ridge, the day we made the hill—we had a rotten location—" They don't say anything. They laugh and listen to their women-folk talking of domestic difficulties—or of air raids. And—this is funny—I don't think to ask them anything about themselves that has to do with the fight. Or is the whole subject too vast to touch upon? I don't know. Imagine asking a man who wears a Mons ribbon, and must have seen the whole struggle, what interested him most in the war. If he had been any of the men I know over here, he would answer, "Getting back home."

A little while ago I had tea in a jolly garden over-

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looking Hyde Park—the kind of house I looked at wistfully for years from Knightsbridge—and one guest there did go so far as to speak of his shattered arm which hung at his side. He spoke of it because his hostess bluntly asked him how it was. “It will always be a dub,” he replied, casually, going on to tell me all about Parsees in India. Yet he had fought from the first engagement, she managed to let me know through ejaculations over remotely removed Indian characteristics, and his regiment was just back to the ground they had lost in the first retreat when the bugle sang truce. Only, while it was the same regiment, there were but three of the original number regaining their old positions, unless an invisible host marched by the side of the newer comrades.

I stumbled out something then of my own curious emotion as I awoke in New York upon the morning of the real armistice, and lay in my bed listening to the shriek of the sirens and the answering roar of the people as they turned out in the clear dawn. “And the noisier the city grew,” I told them, “the more I thought of that great muffling of guns along the miles of battle-line over there. The din seemed to intensify the sense of that silence, somehow or other.”

“It was quiet,” granted the colonel.

“Did the boys cry?” I dared to ask.

“No,” said the gentleman who had fought at Mons. “They just sat down and picked off vermin. They felt they could get somewhere with them, at last.”

It is when I go away from a household like this one, the hostess with one dead boy and another with a dismembered body, or when a mother who has lost her son in real life and comes back (back on the stage) to tell me that in the play I do just what she did,

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that I marvel they bother to receive us Americans at all. For the English women, while knowing their own politics very well, know very little of the workings of other countries. They translate our retarded entry into the war as the concerted wish of a country to make money and remain comfortable. There is no use going into a dissertation on this subject now, but back of their kindly personal feelings many of them read us as a nation in this fashion. I make small effort to combat it, for if it is their sincere belief, how bitter must be the hearts of women with sons killed, who, to their mind, might have been spared had we entered the fray earlier, and, by the force of our numbers, shortened its hideous duration.

It is grimly amusing, however, that those who hold our army in contempt at the same time lay such stress on what we could have accomplished had these same forces been added to theirs at an earlier period. Alas! I think we would have occupied the same place in their cognizances that we hold now, for— But there! I am reaching the crux of my own deductions in the middle of a chapter which started with mild *divertissements*, yet I must write it down as it comes to me, since the social paradox of to-day is this natural mingling of light laughter with deeply serious thoughts. For it seems to me that, back of the sore hearts of bereft mothers and wives—*beside* that, perhaps I should say—which is so understandable, is an uneasiness that emanates from a purely commercial anxiety; that all jealousy between nations such as England and America is founded on competition in trade.

It is a pugilistic encounter without gloves. When one nation slips and falls the count is taken, the

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countries looking on hold their breath, the world is tense. The nation that has slipped and fallen does not rise to its feet, the count is finished, and the world acclaims the conqueror. I know it is Utopian, and cannot be, but sometimes as I go about these London streets I wish I could see pinned upon the breasts of the paper-venders who carry the red-lettered news to the passer-by that my country has cried out to this country: "We are your allies in peace as in war. Let us build up your trade."

But I suppose such Britons as have discounted what efforts we have made—and to me they seem not inconsiderable—would call this offer damned cheek. To change some minds in England—to set them working differently—would be as outrageous to the owners of the minds as the striking off of an honorable quartering on their coat of arms and replacing it with the bar sinister. Though too precious a people, too polished down, for ancient hates, they still possess ancient prejudices which resolve themselves into suspicions. Opposed to whatever is new, they naturally suspect a new country. With centuries of statecraft it is impossible for such minds to believe that the United States has no ulterior motive in its generosity. In our own phrasing, they look for the nigger in the wood-pile. One British host, with unparalleled lack of repression, scoffed aloud the other day when I spoke of the sincerity of our dollar-a-year millionaires. He, no doubt, believes that our great financiers worked through the hot months in Washington to pull off a little deal in shoe leather or tin cans.

Splendidly enough, for me, since my problem over here is but a domestic one, this is the mind which refuses a bit of carpet for the maid's room. It is the

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feudal mind, and it is probably suffering more in this heavy whirlpool of new ideas which is swirling around all classes in England than any of us, who have no traditions to hamper us, can understand. With all this healthy effort going on in Great Britain for a more sympathetic understanding, it is a pleasure to realize that the ruling mentalities are not impregnated by these moldy principles. And, again, it is not the mind of the individual, or a group of minds, which is inimical to development, but the imprint of an old system upon this spirit which is seeking freedom for itself and for others.

I have said, "splendidly enough for me," for it renders the situation less complex when the fault is small as well as large instances can be traced to nothing more nor less than an ancient prejudice that is growing fainter. As in a lithograph upon stone where each impression becomes more blurred until the original scheme of the picture fades into nothingness, so will this old régime grow more and more meaningless, until the paper pulled from the press will issue unstained by the obsolete tracery on the tablets.

• Chapter XII

I LEARNED something more about the feudal system, which I hope I will manage to keep to myself until the end of the chapter, leading up to it by dramatically recounting my experiences which have to do with the cooking of tripe. It must be quite discoverable to all that my mentality is not sufficiently enormous to dispose of the affairs of the British nation, or any other nation no matter how tiny, but sidelights on the situation came humbly to me through tripe and other offal.

For tripe, sweetbreads, brains, liver, and such edible internal arrangements of fish, fowl, and flesh are known over here as offal, and since they are called offal they are low, and since they are low any one who eats them is low—therefore not the lady. I arrived at this understanding through the continued efforts to replace Gladys with a good housekeeper who would take charge of everything, and allow Beechey to get to the studio and paint hair on the dog portrait before night closed in on her early-closing studio.

My desire to supplant Gladys with a working housekeeper grew more keen after Beechey had rendered her first accounts. She had dipped into her money, the accounts showed, and I owed her three pounds. Yet, upon going over the entries myself, I found that—instead—Beechey owed me four pounds

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and then some. She sweetly admitted her arithmetical errors and was not as angry with me as some women would have been upon discovering that they were in the wrong. But she besought me not to tell the president of the guild which worked for the soldiers' orphans, as she had offered to give her services as bookkeeper to this guild, elated by her prospective success over my accounts. The lady, for some reason which Beechey could not understand, had declined this generous desire to do her bit, and Beechey now realized it was just as well, and she would paint them a picture instead.

I had no intention of telling the president, but I did tell the leading man, for it was he who went over the accounts with me. He didn't know any more about accounts than Beechey did, and it was to prove to him how helpless they would both be if they ever attempted to work out any of the problems of life together that I let him see her deficiencies. I was cruel, to be kind. In spite of my impatience with other people's love-affairs in America, I found myself speculating a good deal on the kind of husband Beechey ought to have, and the leading man was not even at the foot of the class. Beechey must marry a business man as soon as I could find him, and the leading man must marry some one who would clean up his room and keep his dressing-table tidy. I had tried disgusting Beechey by arranging for her to step into his dressing-room one night and observe the chaos, but she had not observed anything at all, beyond the man himself, and thought the room was most handsome with a very aristocratic nose. My actor-friend behaved just as foolishly over Beechey charging me nine shillings for cocoa instead of ninepence. He

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said she was a darling, and was perfectly indifferent to the way I was being ever so innocently robbed.

One of the curses of old age is the development of theories. They grow like fungi on old bark. A theory to be applied to somebody else is all that is left of a joy that was once yours. It's the fruit of a tree whose intoxicating blossoms once filled your heart, not your mind. What I don't quite get is the poor quality of a theory that occasionally springs from a highly fertilized experience. I was still clinging to my belief in opposites. However, in this chapter I must stick firmly to what lessons were derived from tripe.

The pleasantest part of a performance in the theater is the going home—we are like the soldiers in that—and the pleasantest night of all is “treasury,” as they say in England. “Pretty night,” some of us call it. Yet eleven o'clock is an agreeable hour after one's work is over, although the work has not been paid for, when a stout little war-'oss is waiting in the rain to take me home. I was very secure in my four-wheeler, and when the chill spring storms grew torrential I wished there could be some way of taking the driver outside inside. I am sure the war-'oss could have managed very well without any assistance, for he frequently negotiated the turns while the driver flapped his arms like a windmill in his effort to avoid complete blood-curdling.

I never grew very well acquainted with my cabby, owing to our occupation of different strategical positions. His respect for me increased the more often royalty came to our door, and our growler stood alongside the carriages or motors with their familiar scarlet hair-line decoration on the deep red body of the equipages. He became a familiar at the stage-door

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entrance, however, waiting for me inside while he talked to the night watchman of the days he drove the Sisters Something-or-other from the Halhambra. I never could make out who the sisters were, as my appearance caused a cessation of the topic, but I fancy they learned to know him better than I did. That is one of the disadvantages of being a leading lady—you cannot get well acquainted with cabbies.

The nearest we came to any degree of intimacy was the night his lamps wouldn't burn and we were scolded all the way down the Mall by observant bobbies. I would not have believed that one small, unlighted growler could attract so much attention. Had I sat on the cab roof, illumining the way by a searchlight, no one would have noticed me. It took us an hour to get to Chelsea, for he would no more light up again than the lamps would once more flicker out, whereupon, fearful of the next bobby, I would tap upon the window and he would descend to strike matches. It ended by my carrying the lantern inside, held close to the window, like a wise but indolent Virgin taking her lamp for a drive. But no matter at what hour I arrived, Beechey would be waiting for me, and after being told by my cabby to "mind the step, ma'am," and agreeing that it was "'orrid weather," I would tap with my umbrella upon the window, to prove I was not a burglar (as burglars do not carry umbrellas), and Beechey would let me in quietly, so as not to disturb the Pomeranians.

Then we would sip chocolate and talk of ways of supplanting Gladys. Beechey had ideas, which reminded me vaguely of the lady who had a great deal of taste—all bad. One night it was the securing of a *bonne* by advertising in the columns of the Belgian

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newspaper established in London upon that nation's overflow into England. She said it would be no trouble at all to secure a *bonne*, and it would be good for our French, as even Belgian French was better than no French at all. I had a feeling that she wanted a *bonne* so that she could paint her. But a Belgian in a studio would be better than a Gladys in a kitchen, and I started out to trace the newspaper to its source. The trouble with this idea was there wasn't any newspaper. It had ceased publication on the return of the people to their country. They had been going home for some time, and, as far as I can make out, no departing guests were ever more warmly speeded.

It is sad that any one could be turned into a pauper after six months' support (I am sure I would become one in less time than that, if I did not die of shock at being supported even for a day), and the Belgians had three years of generous fare. I don't know anything funnier, or anything more melancholy, than to start an English circle on the subject of the Belgians those in the circle have taken care of. It doesn't take a circle. Going along the streets of small villages in the dead of night, you can hear those passing you talking of their departed guests. Scraps of elucidating conversation come to you: "Never thanked me—the best cuts of meat, my dear—simply laughed at the wood-pile; I was willing to pay them—" And so on till the heart grows sick.

The visitors, probably, had a stunned reason of their own. Their country, by its resistance and consequent devastation, they may believe, kept the Germans from the Channel ports while the British prepared their hosts. If it had not been Belgians in England it might have been Germans, they probably

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figure, and there is no argument over which race was preferable to the British. Well, they are gone now, and so is the Belgian paper in which we were to advertise for a *femme de ménage*, and Beechey, who had no doubt visualized her spring picture of an old *grand'mère* making lace, already hanging on the line at the Academy, with great elasticity of mind destroyed the canvas. She now concentrated on a darky. "Why do we not get a colored girl?" she asked, suddenly, one night.

"What makes you think there are any colored girls around?" I returned.

"There are colored men, so there must be colored girls."

Beechey still remains firmly an American, holding on to a few simple beliefs over the instinctive preference of a race for its own, and of a colored man's abhorrence for a white woman. One can't go into that. At least, I need not, although England will find soon that it will have to. Among all the perplexing questions with which it must grapple, Great Britain, to its amazement, is confronted with a black-and-white question of its own. After some fifty years' rightful censure of the rowdies of the United States for their violence toward the black, their own rowdies have developed violence. And, I regret to have to admit it, "mere sex," not fear emanating from force of superior numbers, is the cause of the disturbances. It is a matter that master minds can yet control over here. But when a master, or at least an excellent mind like that of a well-known Englishman, writes a novel martyrizing two colored men because they cannot find any women of England to love them, and does not offer as a solution a college-full of gentle black

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girls in America, I suppose the mob thinks it time to take matters into their own crude hands.

Beechey, however, did discover some colored girls going into the stage-door of "Chu-Chin-Chow," and dared to ask them if they would contemplate a domestic position. There was no insolence in their manner, but they told her they were artists in the theater (probably appearing as slaves, with peacock-feather fans), and preferred it to kitchen-work. For once their poor black skins were of value, and I think that this form of the commercialization of their color is not to be despised.

I did not encourage tempting them. It was enough to have the actress Gladys wading around among our pots and pans; and Beechey, by easy processes of gradation, returned to white folk with but a slight deviation in an effort to secure an East Indian. She had heard about him—a man of excessive pride who had been fighting with an English regiment, and refused to go home until he could return with fifty pounds. A desire to earn fifty pounds was his only qualification for being a "general," so far as I could find out. But Beechey said East Indians could do anything, and she knew now why she had been impelled to buy so much Indian meal. I listened to her, although I knew perfectly well that she wanted a Mohammedan in her household so that she could go marketing up the King's Road with him stalking along a pace behind her, very much enturbaned. She told me a number of times he had a turban. I could hear her saying to the fishmonger, "Give the kippers to my Indian servant." Still, we might have had him if he had not discovered at the place he was then occupying fifty pounds all in a lump under a mattress,

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and, his noble ambitions realized, he returned surreptitiously to his far home.

After these lost motions I revisited the registry, said a few short words over the poor exchange of Gladys for twenty-two shillings and sixpence, and was then conducted into a cubicle to meet Mrs. Baines. I liked Mrs. Baines from the start, and I like her now. She had a dying husband in a sanatorium, a growing daughter who probably ate a good deal, and a very fine letter from an aircraft factory where she had worked during the war. She also had pre-war references when she worked as a general. She did not mind being a general again, she said they must all come to it once more, and she did not wish to draw her out-of-work donation any longer than was necessary. She wanted a pound a week, and, to look at her, was worth it.

I then began making mistakes. I began conniving ways for her to earn more money than the pound a week, which she admitted would barely suffice. I wished to introduce innovations to her advantage into a life that had been circumscribed for centuries. How she could remain so intelligent, with all those years of conformed views, was probably the most astonishing thing about her. But of course, in my violent desire to make a woman of her evident intelligence comfortable, I refused to take that into consideration. I wanted to make her over for her own good at one fell swoop.

She wished to keep a room or two somewhere, so as to maintain a home for her daughter, and I then suggested that she take two days off a week for my laundry, returning to her home after breakfast. I would pay her extra for this, and she could be more

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with her child. But a frightened look came into her face. Of course she would like to be with her daughter, and she had always done her own washing, but she had never washed for any one else. She said it was unusual.

The idea was dismissed—hurriedly. But the interview ended in an arrangement for another one, at which daughter was to be present. My busy mind went on planning for daughter's welfare—a young girl shouldn't be left alone too much—and in a burst of hospitality I suggested that they both make their home with me. While I could read further confusion in her eyes, Mrs. Baines was also pleased. It would save room rent, and in exchange for the girl's food she could make a pretense of sewing for me. I insisted upon being business-like. Mrs. Baines, exercising the restraint I should have possessed, asked me first to look at the girl—nothing should be decided upon quickly, she said. She did not say that she really wished her daughter to give me the "once-over," and my brain was so reeling with happiness over the acquisition of a working housekeeper that I forbore to be impatient over the delay. I would have had her move in the next day, baggage, daughter, and—piano.

I did not tell the landlady that my housekeeper was going to bring a piano, and I kept peeping into Gladys's pennant-decorated room to see if the bed could possibly accommodate two people. If it couldn't, they could have my wider one, moving it down every night when the landlady wasn't looking. I simply was not going to give up Mrs. Baines.

Yet I did lose her. Daughter was as bouncing as I feared she would be, and would undoubtedly eat the seventeen shillings' worth of food which Mrs.

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Wren said her keep would come to. She also had a good deal of manner—much more than I had—the kind that is acquired from sitting on a piano-stool while her mother worked for her. But I could see that she was the apple of this mother's eye, and that she would undoubtedly be contented to stay when piano and girl were once firmly wedged into their quarters. It was my fond belief that if the movers ever got the piano down the basement stairs it could never be taken up again—they would have to stay. Still, I did not wish to appear too lavish, and I thought it well at this second interview to admit to Mrs. Baines that we were economical, although artists. For instance, we did not always care for a joint for dinner—even on a Sunday.

“Not a joint for Sunday!” Mrs. Baines echoed.

I should have stopped there. I already knew that Mrs. Wren and the other dressers gathered together on Monday evenings to discuss the merits of the joint they had the day before, and the difficulty of getting it on Saturday. The littlest girl's dresser had a fearful time with her joints, and admitted that the last one under discussion must have been a cut from some wild beast. Another night I learned that the wife of the property-man had been utterly unable to secure anything but a rabbit. It had been sold with its head off, which was against the law, but it was “tike-it-or-leave-it” with the butchers these days, and she did “tike” it. Yet, being a woman of spirit, she had carried it no farther than the first constable, who had pronounced it to be a cat. Mrs. Wren lived across from the butcher's, and said people at one time had stood all Friday night in line waiting to get the best cuts for the Sunday dinner. Yet here

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was I, in the face of all this precedent, telling my gem, Mrs. Baines, I did not insist upon a joint, and—yes, I said it—could she cook tripe?

I remember distinctly her reply. She said, with perfect control, that tripe and onions made a very nice dish. She did not lie down on the floor and scream, or in any way suggest that I was not acting the lady. So I frivoleed along through my taste for kidneys, liver, brains, and other viscera, quite blind to the fact that Mrs. Baines was receding from me as I spoke. I must admit I had no premonition of a catastrophe on the following morning. I had just told Gladys that I was getting in a housekeeper when a note was handed to me. The note was on robin's-egg-blue paper, and I broke it open languidly, with that lack of enthusiasm one shows over notes from friends not housekeepers. But it was a very civil note from Mrs. Baines to the effect that, on reconsideration, she had decided not to accept the situation.

It was a *matinée* day, but I flew to the registry office with Mrs. Baines's note in my hands. Yet I did not have to show it, for my gem and the blonde had evidently got together immediately upon my departure. The blonde was very condescending:

"Well, madam, you said you wanted the best and I secured the best for you. Yet you asked the best to cook tripe."

"And why shouldn't I?" I roared back. "The French are the finest cooks in the world, and they make a delicacy of tripe. The Anglo-Saxons are the worst, yet they swoon at the mention of the word."

But there was nothing more to be said, and no use in seeking farther for a servant in return for my twenty-two shillings and sixpence. I was the tripe-

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woman in that office. I had forgotten that it had a standard, no matter how false. I was low, and nobody would work for me.

As usual, I flung myself upon the mercies of Mrs. Wren, who was all indignation over the heartlessness of women who didn't care for a good home when it was offered them. If Mrs. Wren hadn't "Dadda" (Mr. Wren) and little Bit (the young Wren bird) and Granny (the great-aunt), she would come to me herself, and look upon it as "a honor." Having these three appurtenances and a small nest to look after, she bethought herself of a far-removed cousin who was doing the whole work of a house with many stairs for the reason that her employer would permit her to keep with her her little fatherless child of six.

The little girl was all she had, but before the war she had a husband and "a little business." Yet he had "joined up," in spite of the excuse of the little business and the new baby, and after he was dead the business grew smaller and smaller, winked out altogether, and the mother went out to service. She had great difficulty in securing a position, as no one seemed to want soldiers' widows and soldiers' orphans together, except myself. And she did not find a place until she would accept the work ordinarily done by two women, yet with the dole of one.

Mrs. Wren gave up her dinner between the shows one day to go to Vauxhall and offer her a home with me (but I would not give in an inch. My last words were, "On condition that she will cook tripe"). And the widow accepted the place gladly. She was to come to the dressing-room to talk it over in a night or two; in the mean time I walked around to the London County Council school near by our Chelsea home

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to see if they would receive so small an infant, and if not, would they make an exception for a soldier's orphan. One of our American novelists was with me, a man of such profound mentality that I had been a little worried over his prospective visits at the *maisonnette* for fear I could not talk up to his standard.

But he found the hired-girl subject as engrossing as did I (will probably make a good deal more money out of it), was interested in the L. C. C. school, which is making fine effort toward manual and domestic-science training, and ended the day very pleasantly by cutting newspapers into strips and twisting them into papers, that we might economize on matches, since we could not on cooks. I speak of these homely amusements for the benefit of other hostesses who may have great writers within their gates. If you haven't ideas with which to entertain them, keep on hand a set of kindergarten tools or a child's clay-modeling outfit; don't talk to them, and they will look vaguely back upon the evening as one of keen intellectual enjoyment.

I can recall but one distinguished visitor in our small house who seemed to have had a better time purely by listening to my conversation. He was an Englishman whose name strikes us with a thrill of promised pleasure when we see it looking up from a table of contents in a magazine; one of those men whose minds we Americans have known for years, but of whose private life we know nothing at all. At least I didn't until he went away. He was Beechey's friend, and while she was below-stairs, licking Gladys into a clean apron for tea, he and I were amiably discussing the arts and the comparative social value of men and women allied to them. Actors

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we dismissed with a wave of the hand, they were too impermanent in their homes and their relationships; writers we approved of, but put aside as too insistently brainy for close companionship; and the palm for modesty, amiability, and general friendliness went to the man who draws and paints. We did not touch upon musicians until the others of the *beaux arts* had been reviewed, and I swear the man was just as ready as I to assert that their beautiful one-sided intellects did not make for peaceful friendships. However, elated over my success in holding his attention without the aid of kindergarten utensils, I grew flippant in my disposal of these people who bring more loveliness into our humdrum existence than any other of God's creatures.

"They are the lowest form of life," I completed, "next to earth-worms."

This made such a great success with him—for he greeted it with roars of laughter, and very few Englishmen laugh at me a great deal—that I could not forbear to repeat to Beechey, upon his departure, my little *mot*. She looked at me mously.

"Splendid!" she encouraged.

"Well, he laughed a great deal."

"He would. His wife is one of the finest musicians in Europe."

I shall continue to read that man's stories with pleasure, but I shall always feel that he has wrenched the plot from some confiding stranger whom he has charmed by his close attention into abandoned revelations.

To work back to Mrs. Wren's cousin: she called at the dressing-room according to arrangement, her kind mother's face beaming over being wanted, yet

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honestly confessing that she had been prevailed upon to remain. The lady for whom she worked had used an adroit argument to keep her on. She had not offered her more money or less work, but she claimed she was too devoted to the child to let her go. "She likes 'er; she likes 'er," reiterated the mother, and went back to climbing stairs with scuttles of coal, cooking and serving dinner-parties, and pressing out morning gowns at midnight.

I might have burst into a declaration of love for the little girl, whom I had never seen, as a counterfoil and delicately insinuated that I would mention her in my will, but that the American novelist had stopped making tapers long enough to examine the rooms I was offering a mother and a child of six, and had agreed with me that it was a poor place for developing the growth of anything beyond the sprouting of onions.

My American friend—for friend he became—was a real Socialist, not a parlor one, and occasionally went to the basements of life to see how things actually were. There are a great many Socialists in the world, and the ablest minds now lean toward a tender concern in the plain people. Yet I do not find among the men who write of these things any great practical demonstration of the theories which they so ably exploit in print. They like good food and good service, and are impatient if it is not good. The subject may be too vast to admit of individual treatment, yet it seems to my raw, Middle-West understanding, if the individual looked after the rights of the little people about him, that it would be more direct than disposing of the subject *en bloc*, and the result would be more immediate.

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We dined delightfully one Sunday night in a very warm house whose hostess was, it goes without saying, an American, albeit an expatriate, and the subject turned upon the housing problem. There is a growing belief throughout the world, at present, that a large family should occupy more than two rooms, but to my surprise those most inimical to the effort that night at table were a man and woman whose names are known to the literary world for great daring and advanced thought. All they advanced that night were archaic ideas. The woman novelist contended that the poor didn't want but two rooms; if they had more than that, they took in lodgers. They simply didn't like better conditions.

"But don't you see," I broke out, in my anxious American voice, "we would still be at the Stone Age if all of us had remained content? Some one must forge ahead, find himself more comfortable, and generously endeavor to make others more comfortable. The weaker must be shaped by the stronger. If the strong won't do it—like yourselves—who will?"

There was a gloomy silence, and I saw that I was too much in earnest, which is trying to a Sunday-night dinner-table; but the lady novelist lightened up the talk a bit by declaring that she would greatly enjoy a return to the Stone Age, for then she might meet the original caveman. She had always wanted to be pulled by the hair. I forbore to remind her that, from all accounts, he would be a good deal like her present husband, and my distress was alleviated by the aristocrat of the party, whom my hostess had apologized for in advance as possibly a dull dinner companion.

He was what we call a "haw-haw Englishman,"

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but he had estates in the north country, where the housing situation is acute, and he said very bluntly, without any haw-haw at all, that he was trying hard to get his people into larger houses. He didn't believe in brothers and sisters sleeping in the same room, and in a few years—after he was gone, no doubt—the tenant wouldn't believe in it either. We were all pretty much the same under the skin, he went on, yes, even the skins were the same. And since his epidermis had learned to feel better after a morning bath, he was sure that his tenants would; it wasn't so very long ago that we first acknowledged the need of tooth-paste; but a man's teeth felt rather grimy without the article, these days, and teeth were the same the world over. What was a luxury soon became a necessity, and the laborer would feel that way about all the innovations which at present he was resisting.

It was quite a long speech, for the type of Englishman that, along with the clergy, we always laugh at on the stage; but it did me a great deal of good, for here was a man whose forefathers had been barons and who may have used the whip on their varlets, yet he had wriggled off the ugly skin of convention that still tightly binds so many souls. The hostess took up the thread at this moment, and said that tooth-paste was not only a necessity, but an article for measuring the passing of time. The last guest staying in her home had said that she would remain for the duration of a tube of paste; she found that two tubes was always too long, and half a tube not long enough. Then, if I remember rightly, the soldier in the party outlined vast possibilities of a host arising in the dead of night to squeeze the tooth-paste of a guest

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whose economy presaged a long visit. And so we went on with prattles—all avoiding the war like mad.

Possibly the real reason for the absence of war-talk was given to me by one of our American airmen, whose work has been with the British, and who has an unabounded affection for them. "The soldier doesn't talk about the war," he said, "because he isn't interested in it. The English soldier, I mean. We will be chewing the rag about it forever in America. The British are a fighting people. It's their tradition. It's an incident with them, a hideous incident which they are ready to forget."

As Beechey and I walked back that night, slippers pattering along on icy pavements, with the hope of a taxi at every corner teasing us on, we agreed that there might be something in this. And if so, it is quite possible that we in America, an agrarian people—or a commercial one, if you choose—found the war much more horrible than did our allies. I don't mean our participation in it, but the eternal consciousness that it was going on. And since it was horrible to us, it may not have been entirely apathy which prevented us from hurling ourselves into it at an earlier period.

A comfortable conclusion, at any rate, although I should not care to advance it at a London dinner-party. They would probably not do anything but look at me, but the more the English look the more I wonder what is going on back of their amiably inclined countenances. Something is going on back of my face all the time, things I would never give expression to, although, as a matter of fact, if the English could see back of it they would find an emotional fondness growing ever stronger the longer I am among them and witness the phlegm with which

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they accept their financial distresses and labor upheavals. But, since it is emotional, I know it would embarrass them if I converted my fondness into speech, so I go on living a restrained, double-faced existence.

They would find also a great desire on my part to be liked—that is, for my country to be liked. The individual they accept over here for what he brings to them, no matter his country. No one has written a better book on Abraham Lincoln than an Englishman, no one a more comprehensive history of the American commonwealth than a Briton. Is it because we are new that an older civilization *en masse* cannot be entirely in sympathy with us? Must they necessarily, from the fact that they are ancient, limit their admiration to what is not foreign to them? “I prefer the New Zealanders to the other colonials,” said a splendid British girl who has been doing hospital work throughout the war; “they are more like the English.” Why could she not have preferred the Aussies or the Canadians because they were different?

I felt very lonely coming away from these parties where every one had been so agreeable to me. I was new and green and an outsider. Perhaps all new peoples feel that way, and I alone confess it. I would determine that I would find an English friend, a close, intimate friend, that I could tell my secrets to and who would tell me hers. Mrs. Wren was my greatest encouragement. The longer she was with me the more she was growing to like us, she confessed. She said we were a revelation to her! Now Mrs. Wren stands for the core of England. Her people have farmed in one district for countless generations. They pay rent to an earl, of whom they are very

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much ashamed. They wouldn't have him on their place! Indeed, he has no chance to get on it, as his creditors collect the rent every year—"yur" Mrs. Wren pronounced it, with an accent that only Eden Phillpotts can write down.

Mrs. Wren, in time, thawed to me because I thawed to her. I can hear you say, "Of course, if you make a *confidante* of a dresser. . . ." But the point is, she didn't despise us the better she knew us, and she didn't like us because we were the same, but because we were different. I had to work, however, for Mrs. Wren's confidence, and it has occurred to me that we newer nations do not work very hard to make ourselves liked or understood. Some of our complacent ones may argue that it is not worth working for, but it seems to me that the good opinion of the world is not to be despised, and 'way down in the hearts of all of us we do want to be loved.

"Comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love," said Solomon, but I know now that he meant sick *with* love. Solomon was too wise ever to be sick *of* it. Yes, every nation wants to be loved, and mere eating apples, mere going on being successful financially cannot take the place of the regard of other nations. I am afraid America will have to "make up" to the older peoples. We will have to go more than half-way. The colonials come bouncing up to meet us, but they are not bound by the cords of a thousand years' conservatism. The English may think us rather ridiculous if they should observe us lumbering over obstacles with their esteem as a goal, but the more I see of England the more I think it is worth the bruising of the body—yes, and of the spirit—to reach the winning-post.

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But here I am at the end of another chapter not only disposing of the affairs of the British, but outlining the possible future conduct of the Americans, and I began with tripe and what it taught of the feudal system. Yet tripe and the subject in hand are analogous. If I could overcome the prejudice against tripe, why can't the United States as a nation overcome any petty lack of understanding between the Old World and the New? By hard work I grappled successfully with the house-heating opposition party; I beat the early attacks upon the door-knocker into acceptance, and by resistance introduced offal into my household, yet still remained the lady.

Mrs. Hacking, our new housekeeper, entered identically with the abasing dish. She could, would, and did cook tripe.

Chapter XIII

ONE observes that the new housekeeper, Mrs. Hacking, embodies Chapter Thirteen. Now that I look back upon it, Mrs. Hacking was thirteen in my London experience, and while "experience is the name we give to our mistakes," we often find our errors to be exceedingly interesting episodes, as, indeed, I found Mrs. Hacking.

She was sent in at the close of our early dinner, from a twelve-shilling registry in the neighborhood. That is, it would cost but twelve shillings to secure Mrs. Hacking, and, as the registry lady suggested, cheap at the price. The split fee was represented by this highly recommended working housekeeper, for she was going to cut everything in two. I did not stipulate at the moment of talking her over in the damp little office with the agent (who dropped her "h's," then added them on again with vehemence) what was to become of the other half of the bills that were to be cut in two—whether it was to go to me or to Mrs. Hacking. The assumption was that it would go to me, for the new housekeeper came of good people in the neighborhood, tradesmen in a small way, and therefore Mrs. Hacking was respectable. When we are called respectable in America we are honest and moral. Over here the Mrs. Hackings are respectable when they keep their heads up, and do not sing in the streets on the way home from parties. Also, I

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think, they must go in a saloon bar, not a public bar, when they want a drink.

We were immediately inclined toward Mrs. Hacking, and wished to rush her into service the next day, but restrained ourselves and expressed a willingness to begin at the beginning of the week, as respectable people should. We had been endeavoring to consume a "sweet," as Mrs. Hacking called, which Gladys had made all by herself. Beechey had contended that if the girl was left alone she might "take the initiative." She had. The sweet consisted of dough, lemon, and salt, and the contempt with which Mrs. Hacking viewed it as she stood by our dinner-table promised better sweets, even sweet sweets, if she came into our service.

Besides this, she was a soldier's widow. Now, though we are opposed to death, a soldier's widow is more welcome than a soldier's daughter. There is no resisting a widow, especially in shabby crape, with a tear in her eye which she bravely refused to shed. Even if Gladys had arranged for the killing off of her father, I doubt if we would have entertained her any longer. For the new applicant possessed, along with this attribute, a capability that was relieving. She knew how to market, run a house, cook, and serve. She volunteered that she would wash up little things like handkerchiefs and fine linen, and I was not to worry about "nothink." She wanted a pound a week for all this, and "will serve you faithfully, madam." She did not say "moddam," but I had given that up long ago. Her very last words at the door were comforting ones. She said she had plenty of aprons of her own, would sleep in her father's house as that would save me bed linen, and knew three ways of

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cooking tripe. I reeled down to the theater and reported to Mrs. Wren, who was as happy as I. She was happier, for I didn't tell Mrs. Wren that there was a fly in the ointment. Strictly speaking, it was not a fly or an ointment. It was the mouth of Mrs. Hacking. Subtly, very subtly, it gave me a warning.

Without in any way referring to this warning, which I was refusing to take, I talked with the littlest girl that night of the way the Creator has of making features so that they display the sinister characteristics of the soul. I remarked how hard it was that the woman with a mean little mouth, or the man with no lobe to his ears, or the child with the evasive eyes, must be shunned by mankind, when the unfortunate possessors had nothing whatever to do with the making of mouths and ears and eyes, or the bad spirits within.

The littlest girl, who has so much wisdom that I don't see where she stores it, replied that those creatures are unfortunate, but, since the laws of life are for the masses, she supposed God protects His people as well as He can against the subnormal or the abnormal by reflecting in the outward formation the moral structure within. She thought the most unfortunate people of all were those who couldn't recognize these little danger-flags, and went on entangling their lives in misspent relationships; also those— She didn't get any farther, as her cue came, and she dashed on the stage in an immoral evening wrap, laughing lightly as one always does when late for a cue.

But I knew what she meant, and I was glad she entered the scene when she did, for she certainly would have continued the subject, as she was very

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thorough, to the point of anathematizing those human beings who are good pickers in life, yet pick frivolously even so. Now I have but two gifts in life. I can tell whether the actor is good, or the part he is playing is good, and I can read character as I can read "Will the cat catch the rat?" It is none of my own accomplishing. Lacking a silver spoon to be born with, my fairy godmother skirmished around for this gift of protection. I am glad I have it, and I would be gladder if I would heed it, but the *maisonnette* was so in need of immediate care that I turned down the flag, as the taxi-driver does nowadays when he sees me anxiously approaching him. I didn't heed it, yet I knew that Mrs. Hacking was mealy-mouthed.

It was the very next morning that a note was brought in to my bedside, a very civil note such as Mrs. Baines would have written, but this time it was Mrs. Hacking, to the effect that upon reconsideration she did not think it wise to come to me. Gladys brought in the message, as she had brought my discharge from the service of Mrs. Baines, and it passed through my mind that she might write these things herself so that she could remain in a pennant room and go to as many dances as she liked.

Sympathy for Gladys had long since disappeared. She was spending her wages on extra jazz steps, she had a very good fur coat, and had loaned a diamond ring to a gentleman to wear on a visit to Scotland. I knew this, as she asked me if I could think of any good way of getting it back. And this exhibition of naïveté alone would preclude any scheme involving the use of a part of her body held in restraint by her black-velvet fillet.

We were always dismissing Gladys, then suggesting

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that she stay on a little longer. At first she used to pack her box, but at the Mrs. Hacking episode she made no effort to dismantle her apartment—"The boy cried, 'Wolf! Wolf!' and there was no wolf." Yet I did not ask her to remain upon the reception of this letter. I carried the oil stove over to my typewriter and, thawing out rapidly, sent a note to Mrs. Hacking raising her wages to five-and-twenty shillings a week, on condition she had no objections to tripe. By nightfall the reply came that—on reconsideration—once more—she found she could accept the position. And I tried not to think of her mealy mouth, but of the tremendous resourcefulness of a woman who could "up" me like that.

Beechey was sympathetic over Mrs. Hacking's case. She said soldiers' widows frequently had terrible obligations: crape was dear—all that expense of getting a pension—and the high cost of selling the piano—and she knew it would make for happiness in the home to be doing the right thing by one who had suffered in the war. I suppose she meant by that Mrs. Hacking's happiness. Yet I saw a mean little advantage in paying the extra five shillings. Like Simon Legree, I could say to Mrs. Hacking, "Now you belong to me." And while Uncle Tom—I mean Mrs. Hacking—might reply, "No, massa, mah body may belong to you, but mah soul belongs to Gawd," I could then respond that her material forces were all I wanted. And Simon Legree could have said it, too, if he had only been clever enough, thus turning the tables on Uncle Tom and giving the play a different ending. I was not going to overwork Mrs. Hacking physically, but for those extra five shillings I was going to be an unhampered American, saying what I

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pleased, eating what I pleased, and indulging in all the vagaries of my race. My instinct—the same instinct that had whispered “mealy-mouthed”—told me that Mrs. Hacking would stick it for the extra pay.

I began on the morning of her arrival. Gladys, by the present of several extra shillings, had been persuaded to leave. She accepted the gift, but it was characteristic of this Canadian girl that she left three halfpence which she owed me on the kitchen-table, along with the dirty dinner-dishes. It was not thieving, according to her training, to leave the dishes, but money she would not steal. And I did have a pang of concern upon her departure, for I don't know what is going to become of that girl—of girls like her. In a burst of confidence we learned from her that she was not only one soldier's daughter, but the daughter of two soldiers. Her father had, in some easy fashion, married a Birmingham “trollop” (I quote the stepdaughter), since entering the war, which had so enraged the mother that she, in turn, had married a “limey,” which is the American doughboy's name for the lime-drinking Tommy, and the father—the first father—was not going to take any of them back to Canada—ever.

She was not despondent, however, and refused to enter the school for domestic science, where we were willing to place her, as she also expected to make a marriage—or two—no doubt hoping to begin with the gentleman who had taken her diamond ring to see the sights in Scotland. I was glad to be quit of her. But—I find myself still watching for her anxiously when I go down the Strand, yet praying that I will not see her prowling there—the terrible aftermath of the war.

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While I have said that Mrs. Hacking came in with the tripe, I was wrong, as the tripe I had already soaking for the luncheon dish. Mrs. Hacking came in with a ton of coal. She came in and the coal remained outside for further orders. Both were welcome. I had been buying scuttles from my landlady, and the coal cellar was at the moment as empty as the kitchen. The new housekeeper did exactly what I would have asked of her. She drew back the curtains to the window with a fine clash of brass rings, and advanced to my bedside.

"Good morning, madam. The coal-man is here. What shall I do for him, madam?"

I then applied the acid test to Mrs. Hacking. "Kiss him," was my order.

She smiled—it was all right—she smiled. "*They are* welcome, aren't they, madam?" And without kissing him, Mrs. Hacking saw that the coal was properly disposed. She brought in my coffee and toast, beautifully brown and hot and buttered. She came in later, in a white apron, and laid the fire. She approved of the fire-lighter. She liked inventions. Her brother was an inventor. He was inventing a geyser—she paused—the invention cost money. She went out, yet I was too at ease with the revivifying effect of Mrs. Hacking's brisk capability to observe that she was hitching me up somehow or other with the invention—that she was inventing something herself.

Perhaps every woman does not suffer the fatigue that comes to me when in continual association with the inept in life. If I were more able myself, I could possibly better withstand this strain on my spinal column. It is a very physical thing with me, resolving itself into a backache that does not come from

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any material burden. And I must confess that, from the arrival of Mrs. Hacking until her—my departure, there was an easing of the loads I seemed to be carrying. The load of playing an emotional rôle, the load of writing (or the business of endless observing, that one may write), the load of talking to strangers, of striving for English friendships, and all the little packets we carry as we make our pilgrim's progress through the world. To revert to American slang, whatever hideous shortcomings Mrs. Hacking possessed, I must "hand it" to her for an able brain that, among its busy machinations, employed itself, as well, in keeping me comfortable.

What perplexes me about the Mrs. Hackings of life is the application of their excellent minds to dishonest gains, when they could realize greater benefits by playing straight. A man with an amazing head for figures avoids the many businesses where his talent would make him valuable, preferring the precarious living of a gambler. One with the gift of expression talks witless widows into empty schemes for investing money, when the same adherence to one good scheme would yield him a better return. A woman with a sense of organization often flits from one shady enterprise to another, and frequently ends in the courts. I am sure that sums accrued from the begging letters which come to our stage-door would be greater if the time spent writing them was applied to an honest industry. Particularly in London the actor is subjected to long, carefully written appeals, and as these letters go to many stage-doors, and hundreds of actors, I doubt whether the response covers the postage. Perhaps it is a kink in their brains that is not of their own twisting—part of the abnormality

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of life which, if it predominated, would become the normal.

Personally, I am glad it is not normal, for I should then be one of the twisted ones, working dully for a living, with all my earnings going rightly to the Mrs. Hackings. Four pounds of my money went over to Mrs. Hacking before the first week was out, in response to a letter under my coffee-pot on my immaculate breakfast tray. But who could withstand:

DEAR MADAM,—I hope sincerely you will forgive the asking—your not knowing me very long—but I wanted to know if you could advance some of my wages, and stop it, say, ten shillings or fifteen shillings a week. I am in need of some many little things which cost quite a lot when you sum them up. My boots will take all this week's money. I was silly to lend my brother all my little capital for his invention, because I have now to wait for it, and I find that with a few lbs I could do so much better than getting them week by week. You do not do so well. And I feel happy with you and will do my best to make you a good servant. I hope you will excuse the liberty.

A. HACKING.

Had I possessed any of those qualities with which the kinky-minded ones are endowed, I might speedily have recognized that Mrs. Hacking was satisfied with her place and wished to secure it by an advance. I would have seen clearly that I would be obliged to keep her on, in order to get my money back, no matter how she behaved. I would have known without any further flagging of danger-signals that a mealy-mouthed one who had so read my character as to have struck for a raise in wages before her wages began, and now begged for a larger sum to insure those wages, would not cease to manipulate further the contents of my purse.

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But I saw none of these things, for I am of those indolent minds, of those weak ones who, once warned and fed and clean, will suffer no abrasion of that life by the introduction of stern principles. I am not sure but that we are the most dangerous of all to a society already suffering from tolerance. Indolently I gave Mrs. Hacking the four pounds, pretending to myself that this was good business for me. I had now even a greater hold on her, something, of course, that she had not taken into consideration. She would be obliged to stay on to work out the loan!

After all, she was worth it, for of what would my thirteenth chapter consist if otherwise? Then there were the purely English dinners, and my pride as she would serve the guests the sauces: "Sage and onions, sir? Sage and onions, madam?" Then the moment, breathless to all of us, before the savory came up, after we had consumed our sweet. The guesses we would adventure. Sometimes it was a dish of Jerusalem artichokes, sometimes macaroni with cheese; once—but at this I balked—Irish potatoes. Only, they do not have Irish potatoes over here, or sweet potatoes; they are white—or yams. The Creator who made Englishmen alone knows the full, deep meaning of the savory, yet I dare to ask the same question of Savarin, who introduced in the middle of a meal the stomach-chilling punch.

As a method of protection I opened accounts with the butcher, the baker, the candlestick-maker, and Mrs. Hacking paid the bills weekly. She also was allowed what she called petty cash for sundry small expenditures. It began petty, but it grew rapidly, yet every week a perfectly balanced ledger, with all the expenditure set down, was handed to me for my

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inspection. Sometimes she would need extra money, for she would go over to Battersea to buy the joint, the news getting around that pork was unusually good over there, if—judging by the price Mrs. Hacking paid—exceptionally dear. But Mrs. Hacking really went to Battersea for me, she always did want me to have the best—and herself the best of that. It was the cutting-in-two business again.

In this skirmishing for good cuts in food and drink of all kinds it was curious how one district would have an amplitude of one commodity, and another part of London be entirely without it. We had money stored up as the squirrel stores nuts, at various grocers', actual money ahead of other people's cash, that we might be given a preference for a bit of cheese. Yet Mrs. Wren could frequently secure cheese at Camden Town. It was so with firewood. Kensington had firewood, Clapham had none. Kensington had all the logs, hawked about exclusively in their streets by men still in uniform, their wagons pulled by little mokes. These donkeys were the first purchase upon the owner's demobilization. It was the soldier's initial effort to do for himself, after the country had done for him for four years.

At our recruiting-stations in the United States we display a placard which once gave me a thrill when I read it in passing. It is among the inducements for going into the army. "Trains the mind to disciplined decision," urges the placard.

And yet—one could see in the eyes of the young log-vender who had set up in business with this purchase of a donkey and cart an enormous lack of distrust over his enterprise—over his judgment. He was on his own, foraging for his own food, clothing

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himself, choosing his own itinerary for the day, after four years' feeding, clothing, and entire compliance with the will of his superior officer. There was no question then as to whether he was to right-wheel or left-wheel, right-about-face or break-ranks. Now, when he and his little cart would come to the crossing of streets, he would hesitate, and sometimes, hesitating, would be lost. Then he would break-ranks, light a pipe, and sit down on the curbstone.

One reads in the papers of the palming off of dying beasts on these poor boys investing their savings in this manner, but it is as impossible to realize this type of swindler as it is to conjure up which member of one's club is a thief. I believe there is said to be no club without a thief. England seems to be divided into two classes at present: those who are expending every fiber of their being for the welfare of the demobilized man, and those who are as set upon destroying him. The problem of finding jobs for all is not yet acute, and the passer-by is spared the sad derelicts that draped themselves upon the Embankment and park benches a decade ago. And this is so hopeful a sign that a stranger feels the man who is wearing out his body to help these disbanded men at this crucial stage has, at least, found ease for his soul.

It is said that during the war these pallid, underfed, or gin-soaked creatures did not exist at all, going to prove the contention of the littlest girl that a human being will work rather than go hungry, if the job is offered to him. After generations of underfeeding, men and women lack the initiative to look for work, and this harks back to the question as to the real effect four years of army service will have upon the

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young men starting out in a little business. Disciplined decision? He will be disciplined, but what has been his training for decision? I ask the question humbly—I don't know.

It may be that the opportunities for the consumption of spirits so lessened that the derelicts on the benches took food instead of drink, and found themselves no longer derelicts. The mere business of moving about in the search for gin nowadays creates a vigor which is opposed to the hulk with barnacled sides. I could never have been a derelict in London, for in the effort to acquire a modest cellar both Mrs. Hacking and myself were continually on the move. I suppose my activities to acquire liquors of any sort for visitors to our *maisonnette* will be read but languidly by my country-people at present—a poor striving as compared to their stealthy burying in back yards enough spirits to span one little life.

This pursuit of a bottle in England seems to be the final reversal of the glass—in more ways than one. When a crowd collects in a London street to watch a mildly intoxicated man, to watch him with admiration and respect, to watch him with bitterness, you feel that almost anything can happen now. And when Mrs. Wren, who has been searching for a bottle of Scotch for me, comes hurrying up the steps to announce, in a glad voice, that she cannot get the whisky, but has “heard of a bottle of gin in Highgate,” you fall down on your knees and pray, for the world is over.

One may think that this has nothing to do with Mrs. Hacking, whom I left buying pork at Battersea, but she is across every page. For Mrs. Hacking, with Gladys, with the demobbed man and the donkey, are

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the offsprings of the war who may some day become the derelicts of future time. Not due to lack of work, but to the war itself. It was not significant to me at first that Mrs. Hacking marketed generally at the noon hour, and if there was no marketing to do she would go out when the clock struck twelve to change a shilling into pence for the gas-meter at the corner pub. I had pennies, but my housekeeper did not like to disturb me. Sometimes she came back with a headache, but she always served me decently, although maddening the landlady by taking a hot bath in company with the geyser in the afternoon. By the dinner hour she was quite all right again, going out at six-thirty for more pennies sometimes, but staying far into the evening that she might leave her kitchen clean or prepare a dish for my late supper.

She seldom went about at night, although her brother the inventor would urge her not to grouse and would occasionally take her to the Town Hall. She told me once that it was a *soirée* at the Town Hall, a regular one, as several songs were sung. Yet it was the night of one of these *soirées* that her purse was stolen, containing two pounds of my money and her own wages. She told me this immediately on bringing up the morning coffee, her true-blue eyes, the kind you read about, looking at me squarely. She had been grizzling all night over it, she said, as she would "arsk herself 'ow she was going to pay her lady back." Her brother the inventor had not derived any profits from his geysers yet, and "indeed, madam, you earn't blame me for grizzling; husband gone, piano gone, mangle gone, and now your money."

I did not blame her for grizzling. What surprised me was that I did not grizzle myself. Grizzle over the



"SPRING, YOUR LORDSHIP, SPRING!"

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perfidy of Mrs. Hacking. Nor did I grouse when I certainly had occasion for being annoyed over her carelessness at the *soirée*—all of it going to prove that you cannot be too careful among singers. I feared—it came to me now—that Mrs. Hacking might be an inventor of greater profit to herself than her brother would ever be. In Mrs. Hacking's case I was the geyser from which money was to be made. But at that I rose from my bed to look over her accounts, with never a nine shillings substituted for ninepence worth of cocoa; and I upbraided myself for my suspicions.

Or was it "the advent of spring," as the clerk trying on my shoes very elegantly expressed it, which rendered me lax? For, by the 1st of April, we had been unmistakably apprised that there would be a spring. A spring which just showed itself by an appearance of buds in low, sheltered bushes in the square, yet, upon close examination, there was no bud whatever, just a swelling of the twigs. Then there was that wonderful but chilly morning when the oil stove and myself, upon making our little promenade to meet the bath-tub, did not immediately close the door giving upon the garden, for, peeping in, was a waving branch of a bush climbed from over the neighbor's brick wall, and strung along it were palest green buds, like jade beads on a fairy wand.

Two days after that I saw, but did not see—saw, but did not see—a red furriness softening the stark branches of trees in distant squares. But not the trees in our park—not those wise old plane fellows. No, not for Easter would they put on new clothes. You couldn't tell them anything about an English spring. Let the young ones rush into fresh garments, counting

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hopefully on the softening influence their eager young green would have upon the weather, the plane-trees would remain within themselves until May. For the wind is not tempered to the young shoot on this island, and this harsh opposition of the elements is the only reason I would not ask for every spring in England.

Here the green things come out before the rains have ceased to chill. Sniff as I might, I could get no scent of the earth sending up its heart-stirring fragrance after the first warm rain such as we have at home. Every obstacle is placed in the way of the development of the year, but, against the cold rebuffs, re-creation battles on. And I think this sturdy growth in spite of the bitter winds stands more perfectly for the English people than any other simile that comes to my mind. It is time to smile, they do smile. It is time to be gay, they are gay. The lip must be kept stiffened, it is kept stiffened. They flourish in spite of the oppressions of mean social conditions and cruel economic complications. They have got into the swing of the English seasons. They are the English seasons.

Since God created the spring, He surely must allow each mortal one springtime indiscretion, and does not enter it against him in His judgment-book. It may be a hat, a lover, or a Spanish chair. It may be stealing other people's crocuses, or running away from school. It may be, as in my case it was, the continuation of Mrs. Hacking, that I might grapple no further with servants and enjoy every opening daffodil in Hyde Park, every lilac in our little square.

It was probably a particularly foolish indiscretion. As I write now, knowing that I should be landing

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Mrs. Hacking behind the bars instead of likening her to a springtime kicking-up of the heels, I can hear the judge on the bench—with me in the witness-box and Mrs. Hacking in the dock—asking me what caused me to retain the woman Hacking's services when I had become suspicious of her. And I could hear my reply, and how I would be asked immediately to step down. For I would have embarrassed the judge by suddenly ejaculating, after the manner of a gymnastic teacher:

“Spring, your lordship, spring!”

Chapter XIV

WITH the spring came processions. Always on matinée days, of course, and generally cutting me off from the theater. The first, if I remember rightly, was the marching of the Guards in honor of their return and in honor of those that did not return. It was whispered by the journalists that they were being paraded through the city as an evidence of their strength if they were needed to oppose policemen itching to strike, and Labor deciding every Sunday in Hyde Park to labor no more, then going out on Monday morning with the dinner-pail, per usual. There were mutterings that machine-guns were planted over the city in all sorts of unsuspected places, for the use of those Guards. Ugly rumor was rife in England, and why anything as unwelcome, ill favored, and untruthful as rumor should be a lady I don't know. Was it as gallant a gentleman as Shakespeare who first called rumor a dame?

If the Guards were hurried out as a menace to the public, the public was perfectly delighted with this demonstration against it, brought its breakfast and lunch and sat on the curbstone to cheer the King's men as they passed. Only—the English do not cheer much; that is, I did not think they cheered much until—but if I complete this part I will reach the conclusion of the whole matter. Everything from now on would be an anticlimax, and the only way to get any dra-

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matic value out of my writings would be for the reader to start at the end and work forward. Fancy reading: "End the is so and"—it makes even less sense than my regular way!

But as time went on, and all *matinée* days seemed to be given over to processions welcoming various home and colonial troops, as hundreds of thousands of men marched through the streets, it got into my twisted intellect that it was a rather absurd form of entertainment. For four years troops have been hiking wherever their country sent them. They've marched and counter-marched, and bled at the feet and shoulders, broken down their arches and broken down their hearts. They must be almightily tired of tramping. Why don't we have the troops sit on the curbstone and in the High Places, and let us march past them? How many of us would turn out, I wonder, and how often? And oh—most deplorable thought of all—how many of the soldiers would come to see us march?

When one is in the parade area of London one would think that the rest of the city was empty, but upon going into these unaffected districts the passers-by upon the street are as many as ever, and trade is untouched by a million or more of citizens gathered along the line of march. Since Chelsea was not astir on that day of the first great procession, I foolishly took a mild, well-behaved No. 11 bus that looked as though it would not lose its head in a crowd, but get me safely down to the *matinée* with that respect for Art which a Chelsea bus should have. We would follow along the line of march after the troops had gone over it, I cleverly planned, and in that way I would not be held up.

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I admit I was a little late eating my luncheon, as I had been taking a lesson from Mrs. Hacking, in the absence of the landlady and the Pomeranians, on the meaning of the various knocks on the knocker. Mrs. Hacking would stand outside the door and say to me, inside, "I am the post." Then there would be one large knock and a small echo following; or she would say, "I am a tradesman," accompanying this by a single loud dropping of the iron. She went through them all, post, telegraph, tradespeople, and ladies, and enjoyed being a lady most, when she would rat-a-tat-tat indefinitely.

It seemed very easy, but when I went outside the door and called in to Mrs. Hacking, "I am a lady," Mrs. Hacking would call back I was the telegraph-boy; and when I had a letter for her, she claimed I had brought only a potato. I don't think any one can really perform on the knocker except a Britisher or a Spanish dancer skilled in castanets. We had a great deal of fun over it, creating the usual London crowd that springs up from between the cracks of the pavement, and Mrs. Hacking, who was rather weary of the austerity of the Square, said that no one could gather a crowd in that locality but an American. Still, she was not disapproving. She had concluded the lesson by admitting that I was "a darling to work for, in spite of my American ways." And while that reminded me she would never have had four pounds advance had I not been a wayward American, it also reminded me that neither of us was working, and luncheon was hastened on—and down.

Ten minutes after I had gone riding off in the No. 11 bus it began behaving remarkably. I knew the route of this 11 bus, and took it sometimes in pref-

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erence to the more aristocratic section through which 19 and 22 made their way. I always looked for the encouraging sign of an undertaker along this route which read, "Funerals with reform," and I would plan my own funeral until tears of pity for myself would run down my cheeks. I don't know what the undertaker meant by it, but I think the last thing England will accomplish will be the reformation of funerals. Weeps will be hired, and crape, and there will be a drop of something afterward, but there is a certain canniness in holding off reforming until your funeral; it is done with the last gasp generally, or what is supposed to be the last gasp, and if it doesn't turn out to be one's last, it is very awkward getting back to your old ways, with all the family reminding you of your spiritual change. Having a funeral with reform is like one of the American women over here who has left in her storeroom in New York City one bottle of wine and one of whisky, and who announced to me quietly that she would go home, drink it up, and then sign the pledge.

However, I suddenly discovered that we were avoiding that sign, and bus 11 was going in and out of all sorts of strange streets (to the hurrahing delight of the children of the neighborhood, who mistook us for an elephant), evidently pursuing another bus just ahead of us, as though feeling the advent of spring itself. "Where are we going?" I asked the girl conductor.

"Nowhere in partickler, lady," she answered, taking a piece of filet lace out of her overcoat pocket and beginning to crochet with a settled-for-the-day air. It was a very flippant answer for a bus with a route and a destination, and we were not alone in our

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frivolity. We came suddenly upon an open place, where a number of huge conveyances were skipping clumsily around, under the impression that they were lambs in a meadow.

Then I knew while we were not in the procession yet were we of it—at least the victims of it—and that the terrible edict had gone forth to “stop traffic.” It takes but a London bobby’s little finger, or the slightest negative movement of his wrist, or simply the turning of his back upon approaching vehicles to cause in five minutes a congestion that in New York would be an hour amassing. A mile or two ahead of us some bobby, somewhere, under orders, had turned his back upon us.

It is going to be quite impossible to make the reader understand what it means to a player to miss a performance. But she may get a hint of the gravity of not playing when the morning papers reveal, now and then, that Miss So-and-so, whom she saw acting light-heartedly the night before, had news of the death of her mother before going on the stage; or she may read of an actor dying of appendicitis at midnight who had played through the evening, or of one found dead in his dressing-room, fully made up, but unheeding at last of “Beginners, please, sir.” The instinct to live is the strongest in human nature, but I am sure with the actor it is welded in time with the instinct to get through a performance. Not a heroic people in any way, we players, childish, uncontrolled, unlearned sometimes; but we have a sense of responsibility in our work which I trust balances our shortcomings, for it must emanate from an appreciation not of what we owe ourselves, but the men and women we entertain. Surely we are the real Servants of the Public,

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Then, I beg of you, as I sprang from 11 bus in a far slum, a thousand miles from anywhere, try to imagine the chaos of fear in my heart. I was going to miss my performance—for the first time in my life I was going to miss my performance. My brain swam; then, steeling my panic (I spelled it first "stealing," and it expresses my condition very well), I became clear-headed again, and very crafty. Coincident with a mighty determination to give that show, a taxi crossed my vision. It was a taxi with no desire to take on a passenger, or do anything except to get out of this Dutch picnic of fat leviathans, and whizz into better company. If you can get into a cab, the driver cannot refuse to accept you as a fare, and in this way, while the car was finessing a path by running cautiously along the sidewalk, I climbed in all unbeknownst to the chauffeur and became a passenger.

The driver behaved even worse than usual over the prospect of making money. He roared to me to get "daown," and I roared back that I would charge him if he didn't "take me on." I pled with him, too. I reminded him that his own wife might be waiting at that very moment to see me act. "Think of the women and children," I concluded, softly.

He "took me on," not that he was touched, but it must have occurred to him that he might empty his open taxi by whirling me around corners, for I was standing up half the time, trying to drive with my spine. And when he saw this was no good he tried running down pedestrians, so that we could both be arrested, and go nowhere except to gaol. But they all got out of his way, as I would cry, "Hi! hi!" from over his shoulder, which embarrassed him, as Englishmen do not like a fuss, especially when running over

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pedestrians. So he gave that up, too. And finally the sportsman which is in every Briton got the better of his savage, shell-shocked nature, and he assured me he would get me there, and, as it was going to be costly, "do try, lady, to enjoy the ride."

I think in the next half-hour we visited every place of interest in London, west, northwest, and north, except the Zoo. I felt hurt, late that night, as I stretched my nerve-racked body, and recalled that we had not gone to the Zoo. We were a zoo of our own. We joined a flock of other mad vehicles with the heads of other anxious passengers stuck out of the window, and ran hither and thither. I thought nothing could be worse than going through the streets, until we made our way into Hyde Park, for some reason or other, and inadvertently again became part of a crowd of motor-buses, now evidently under the impression that they were perambulators. In the middle of the park I realized, as the blockade became greater, that I could not even telephone I was not coming. I realized this at the moment I discovered myself to be almost entirely undressed. My boots were unfastened, garments loosened, and hat off, for I was making unconscious attempts to do up my hair after the fashion worn in the play.

Then something more happened, as the blocked vehicles began wedging their way forward—the petrol gave out. The driver confessed it, and without satisfaction. He was even sorry for me, sorrier than for himself. He must have caught the despair in my eye, for he arose to a supreme height of ingenuity. "There is one 'ope—a hambulance. They can go through the lines." He probably thought I was a fit case for one, and at that, with the concerted effort of our two

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wills, we did conjure up an ambulance. It was a little American one, of whose appearance we are not very proud over here, for our machines are cheap and buntzy-looking as compared to the luxurious proportions of the British cars. "An ill-favored thing, but mine own," yet, like these little motors on the battlefield, it could go anywhere. And it did.

Two gum-chewing doughboys drove it, while I, a stretcher-bearer case, with the curtain-flaps tied down, lay inside, my watch in my hand. Yet I did not need my watch. I knew that those boys were going to back me up to the stage-door in time for my performance. And my first statement to the members of the company who had gathered nervously on the pavement was significant of a woman's enormous interest in herself: "What," I gasped to them, my head protruding from the curtain, "what if America had not gone into the war?" The play went on, the little ambulance remained outside, and gum was chewed throughout the afternoon by two honored guests in the audience.

Naturally, the arrival from France of these various regiments who marched in the Guards' procession antedated this event, and it was to see how London received the conquerors before they were scoured up for show that I attended the detraining of the Scots Guards on the first day that one could ride on the top of a bus and ask oneself, "Were three overcoats necessary?" I was preparing for a tremendous welcome. England has shown throughout the war more emotionalism than has her temperamental sister, France. In 1916, at least, regiments marched through the streets of Paris without so much as a head turned in their direction. Even the little French boy, in

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black, continued to roll his hoop along the Elysées walk. It may have been because he *was* in black, because he and all the rest of France were as much part of the war as the warriors themselves, that he had become apathetic over the clump-clump of soldiers' feet.

Certainly emotionalism was not encouraged. The *blessés* for Paris were taken off the hospital trains at Gare de la Chapelle, a remote station, where the public had no access. Here in London, for four years, Charing Cross Station has been the sad, daily Mecca of thousands of citizens who came with flowers and dainties and a sob in their throats for the wounded, hastened by rail and water in twenty-four hours' time direct from their Calvaries. They tell me the crowds never lessened and the tears never ceased. And I think it is very significant of the English that they do not show their affections unless their people need it very much. There is the story of an earl who became a private, only to find himself in company with one of his grooms. Yet he remained an earl as far as his attitude toward the groom was concerned until the "mere person" was wounded, when the belted gentleman worked over him in an agony of devotion, as he would have worked over his own kin.

Certainly the enthusiasm over the Scots Guards was tempered. I met them at Madame Tussaud's and began demanding angrily of the woman next to me why the people didn't cheer. She said she didn't know, as she had come up from the country, which was reason enough. I essayed a feeble shout, and was looked at, oh, ever so kindly! but looked at. After that first cheer, which gave me courage, I was ready for anything, and, quite to my own surprise, found

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myself alongside the color-bearer, in company with several unashamed females who undoubtedly had their men in the ranks. I had no man, but they were a fine-looking set, and I was very willing to let any one think I had. I also ran ahead at various points, and tried to start a cheer. I was quite mad. Certain contained gentlemen must have longed to cry, "Egad, why doesn't this noisy American go home and cheer?"

One had to run to keep up with these fellows. They give no appearance of moving rapidly, but their stride is so long that I must take two paces to their one. At Oxford Street I made my way fiercely through the crowd, inciting them to violence, and I also blazed a trail for the most delightful woman on the pavement. I had noticed her in my gallopings to and fro. She was limping along, perfectly silent, but beaming from every pore, with her eyes fixed on one huge, middle-aged giant, who was looking most conscious, and in his embarrassment refusing to take any notice of her. She was undoubtedly his "old woman." She carried, as a flag to attract his attention, a pillow-case which she had not quite the courage to wave at full length, for she was a lone critter, but kittle-cattle in the eyes of men. Still, we managed it together. At one point where they marked time, lifting their feet high as our soldiers scuffle, the old woman and I linked up together, although she never knew this, and I besought her to "Wave! Wave!" while I piped up "Hip! Hip!" One "Hip" will start an English crowd. They caught the word, the pillow-case soared, the masses cheered, the soldier turned and nodded to his "old woman," and then their neat black shoes pounded on to South Audley Street.

She remained behind. She was satisfied, and she

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would have been more so could I ever have told her of his continued wagging of his head as he marched along, and of his face softened in delighted recollection. I was by this time running everything. I was unconsciously murmuring, "Hats off," to those who did not salute the colors, even though I was glad to find that the average man in the street was as little inclined to lift his hat as the average man is at home. But it made me a little heavy-hearted, since I had adopted this regiment, that the loudest cheers along the way were given by the troops themselves whenever they passed a hospital. They had a funny way of going sharply and quickly, "Hurray, hurray! hurray!" and no more, to the wounded men and the pretty nurses. And perhaps there were eleven of that marching regiment who gave another and a silent cheer for the original full complement of their first number. Eleven alone are left of that first flaming regiment that swept over France, and, like a forest fire, was batted down.

This was the day when I came home perspiring, not a delicate subject nor worthy of record, but of such interest to me that I see less humor than I once did in the Scotch courtship which begins with, "Do you sweat?" It was a red-letter day for me, although I might have fixed the date easily any way, for Mrs. Hacking made it memorable by conveying to me, delicately, her fear that Beechey drank. I had taken occasion to mark our port and sherry, one of those lead-pencil marks on the label that any one who was crafty enough to steal liquor would be crafty enough to see. But the liquors continued steadily going down, and when I summoned up the courage to speak to Mrs. Hacking about it (oh, those heart-

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beating moments in domestic life when we must begin to make a row!), she said that she herself had noticed the marks on the bottle when she arranged them in the cupboard, and had appreciated why I had put them on. Once or twice, being an older woman, she had thought to make bold to speak to her (my brain grew thick at "her"—what did Mrs. Hacking mean by that?), but of course "it ain't my plice, madam, is it?" It all came, Mrs. Hacking delicately concluded, from the poor young girl (oh, undoubtedly Beechey now!) being so dispirited from the war. A body was one of two things now—low-spirited or too high-spirited.

I could, and should, have replied to this that if Beechey was low-spirited, she was 'igh, and I wanted her to leave my own particular kind of spirits alone; but the fear of an out-and-out clash with any one so infernally clever as Mrs. Hacking was not in tune with my idea of a peaceful spring. I tried now to square my conscience with the placating thought that, while I was losing money by Mrs. Hacking, I was getting another side-light upon the war—its consequences—which was good for the book. Thus, as usual, sacrificing myself for art.

The situation was complex. Out of partizanship for my friend I declared to her that if Beechey needed spirits she must have them, and no doubt Mrs. Hacking knew I would say this, and knew that I would not dare lock up the bottles, which would suggest a lack of faith in my guest. So I went on, a fly in a spider's web, without a buzz in me, and longing at times most ardently for my abstemious colored girls at home.

But to the end Mrs. Hacking was not a revolting spider. She kept the web neat, and beyond an in-

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clination to let her hair go blooey on the days she had the headaches, beginning at noon when the pubs were open, she always made a good appearance. In a very impersonal way, I could not help but admire the intelligence with which she ensnared me. She stood for a lesson to all the vampire breed, who generally give themselves away by their clothes the moment they slink upon the scene. Since she was intelligent, I tapped her fount of wisdom as often as I could that I might gain some mental advantage to oppose my material losses. In spite of her upbringing (and on headache days she darkly suggested that her father's mother was a lady), I don't think she had ever had much of a chance, even though she had been sent to a Board school—ninepence a week, if you please and sixpence extra for French.

At fifteen she had gone into "the bar," in the East End of London, and after that came years of service with splendid ladies of good address who called her by her last name, as I would never dare to do, and who played bridge for such high stakes that occasionally the 'tecs called at the house. I thought when Mrs. Hacking first told me this she was referring to students, and I asked her where was the Technology. And as she replied they did not call it the Technology over here, but the police station, I realized she was speaking of detectives.

The occasional mislaying of a fifty-pound note or the discovery of marked cards did not detract from the enjoyment of being a servant in such households. Again a dull below-stairs existence was kept in a glow by vicarious excitements, lurid, tainted joys, but joys held in esteem by the Mrs. Hackings of life, since the participants were their highly scented betters.

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Then came her marriage, her two children, a little house in the suburbs and, from what I could gather, a decent existence. After an interval was recorded the loss of one child, then war, the loss of her husband, the loss of the second child, and the parting with the piano and the mangle. Again Mrs. Hacking went out to service, not shaken by grief—I found no signs of that—but rather like the belting that has slipped from off the fly-wheel and goes beating dangerously around in the air.

On the day she told me she had “joined up” for motor-van instruction and service, to take effect when I gave up my house, I told her bluntly that I would not give her a character for such head-work. I had a picture of Mrs. Hacking wiping off the foam on her khaki sleeve at the noon hour and climbing up on a high seat to go cavorting over humble folk like me. She expressed surprise at this, and showed me her letters of commendation for her work “in the shells.” She then went into the many processes of munitions meticulously, and practically constructed a deadly explosive for me as I had my breakfast.

She did not lose a night in eighteen months, but was beat out when she got through. Yes, she had seen some 'orrid sights, a girl scalped from forehead to the nape of her neck, and all just from carelessness. Nine out of ten of the accidents were from indifference to rules. Ladies had worked alongside of her, some of them had driven her home in their own motor-cars, and the ladies didn't generally have accidents, for they were more careful; still, they were awful tired driving home. The girls of the lower classes would keep their hair up with wire hairpins,

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although they were told of the risk they ran. They didn't seem to take it in.

And yet, Mrs. Hacking thought, on the whole, munition-making was work better suited to the roughest girls, and from what I could make out by that statement it was because they had less imagination and worked in less terror with a deft sureness. All the more credit to the great ladies, Mrs. Hacking thought, and so did I, for I, too, had once intended going into the shells, that I might share some of the real dangers of war. Yet the picture of ensuing bleeding stumps had reduced me to such a state of incompetency that I had been told I would be of no use, anyway.

"Yes, it was exciting, madam," concluded my housekeeper, walking off with the oil stove to the bath-room, "and it leaves a blank."

She went out at noon to change a shilling for pennies at the pub, and I could understand that this was Mrs. Hacking's way of filling up the blank. That same night she served us with a crab that was probably entered in my housekeeping-book at three times what she had paid for it, emulating her betters in an interesting form of double-dealing without fear of the 'tects. So worked her able, dishonestly trained mind.

It was rather a relief to seek refuge from the plottings of my *maisonnette* and go down to the House of Mirth, as I heard one theater-goer call the abode of our comedy-drama. We women sit in the wings near the entrances, and work on sheer underwear now, whereas the actresses during the war knitted socks as they waited for their cue. Roars from the audience, varying in volume, come to us. Sometimes there is a silence when we were rhythmically expecting the

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usual laugh, and we look at each other and smile, for the actor on the stage has slurred his point. The stage-manager comes from the "prompt" entrance and growls because the man "changed his reading," or he will briefly announce, "Somebody coughed."

It's everybody coughed when I'm on the scene, or it sounds that way, but one cough from one auditor is as a javelin leveled against a comedy-point; and I don't see how the vocal expression of a tickling sensation in the throat is always arranged for just on the word that brings the laugh. Sometimes the actor hears a sort of preparation for the explosion, and hurries to the end of his sentence before the climacteric bark is reached. "Beat him to it," the juvenile whispered to me the other night, as I was galloping along ahead of a gentleman easing his bronchitis, and I did reach my top-note before he got to his. But again, they are too swift for me, and then I must repeat my phrases, mark time with an appearance of natural, hesitating speech, until the cough is stilled and I ring out my voice on the point. The audience laughs at me then for being a kindly, humorous person; but oh, if they knew the hate in my heart!

For it would seem that some theater-goers buy a stall, or an orchestra-chair at home, for the express purpose of rumbling their affliction through the auditorium. It is a little pleasure party for the cough. The possessor should really buy an extra ticket, one for himself and one for the bronchial tubes. They are both equally in evidence. The patron of the arts will argue that he can't help it—but he can. He can restrain his cough until a point is made. When the scene becomes tense on the stage the coughing ceases all over the house. They forget the cough,

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and when the situation is relieved the whoops begin. It is the same way on the other side the curtain. How seldom an actor coughs on the stage, yet how often he coughs in the wings, to the distress of his companions still on the scene! And on that night you hear an actor bark through his own lines send for the undertaker—he is far gone.

It comes to me some nights, when the great, round, welcome volume of laughing sound continues delightfully through the piece, when royalty is in the box, and the comedian is playing up, when the carriages of the sovereigns wait outside by the stage-door, and well-dressed plain-clothes men stand casually about—it comes to me then that this is not entirely the House of Mirth, but the House of Contrasts, for the real drama is not of the stage, but of the men behind the scenes, and with a full cast of characters in the audience to balance our comedy with their tragedies.

We play to all sorts of peoples, and various messages are brought by those actors who have opened the play and made their exit to those yet to make their entrances. "Pitch your voice high," we suggest, for we have seen a young man in uniform with his hand to his ear, straining for the humor of the play. Or it may be, "Don't stare down on the front row—a boy is there with his nose gone." At times from across the blur that the footlights create we detect curious little bobbing motions, as though late-comers were having a hard time reaching their seats far from the aisle. Then we see, with a pang of pity that in no way affects the mechanism of our comedy, that some one-legged soldiers are hopping between the rows, their crutches resting against the gold incrustation of the boxes. We so often see those crutches against the

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boxes. They are but homely yellow oak amid the gilded garlands, yet surely no theater ever boasted a more noble decoration.

On the days that the blind soldiers of St. Dunstan's are in front we find ourselves introducing lines into our speeches that they may more perfectly understand the action of the play. As we pick up our properties we mention their names; when a mimic battle is fought with dishes, the china is articulated aloud. We call the characters by name, as they make their entrances. And if we do this haltingly I pray that the audience will pardon us, for after weeks of rhythmic speech the introduction of new words, even new gestures, fills us with panic.

It was only the other day that I suddenly discovered I had cut the comedian out of three of his best laughs by jumping down to the end of the scene. They were laughs on lines, too, and not on actions, and there were blind boys in front who would have enjoyed the point, so I was all the more apologetic to the comedian when we made our exit. I confessed to him that I had been mentally rehanging my pictures in my New York flat, and he said he had been in his New York parlor while we were playing the scene, telling his folks all about the trip. The funny part about it is that my understudy, out in front, said we really did play the entire scene, never did it better, and the blind boys had laughed uproariously. The comedian didn't know he had spoken the lines, I didn't know I had heard them, so busy were we in our New York apartments. Not that this has anything to do with the House of Contrasts, but that it goes to show, when one has become mechanical, the possible terrifying effects of introducing new words and actions.

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And I like to think that we get along with our innovations as well as we do because we are intent upon the *mutilés* and not, strangely enough—as we are supposed to be a vain lot—concentrated upon ourselves.

Back on the stage the little tragedies continue, unwritten, unsung. On a narrow platform on the O. P. side, the spot-light that shines upon our comedy is controlled by a demobbed man who agonizingly drags himself up the iron ladder which leads to the light, for his spine is permanently injured. I never get any farther than, "Is it bad to-night?" and he answers, "Pretty bad, ma'am."

He is less optimistic than the gentle-eyed soldier with the paralyzed arm who feeds the light on the "prompt" side. He is always "getting better, thank you." He is trying to get better. After he has pulled himself up the little ladder by one arm, he sits alongside his light and employs both hands by embroidering industriously, while we women below, amid our billows of fine nainsook, occasionally smile up at him—a comrade in the arts.

At the back of the scene the third light was for a time watched by a perfectly whole young man wearing a belt covered with regimental badges of all kinds—cut from off dead comrades, I fear—which were to be secured from him at a price. The tragedy of this young man was his wholeness, for, try as he might, he could get no regular work to do, and guarding the "spots" is not sufficient to keep one whole. So he was driven back to the army, joined up for Russia, and only prayed he was to have the care of 'osses. There were two over in France that he had grown particular fond of—Gipsy and Doorkey

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(I went back several times to ask him about Doorkey, and finally discovered the horse was Darky), and he cried like a babby when he 'ad to leave them. He said feeding the light in the theater was no man's job after feeding 'osses, and there I agreed with him, for I can imagine nothing more sacrificial than training a light to shine on somebody else.

He alone, of all the stage crew—and every one of them is touched by the war—was willing to talk of his adventures. I think with these little men it is not from lack of interest, but that it is all, all unspeakable. Besides, when a thing is over with an Englishman, it is over. To be sure, Mrs. Wren will give me information on the treatment of her nephew, long imprisoned by the Germans, and how the men suffered until the blessed Red Cross packets came through. The nephew is now back in the business with his father, restless and miserable, I learn (for naturally he would confide in Mrs. Wren, as I do). He would as lief be a German prisoner, he says, he would liefer, for a prisoner has a chance of escape!

Mrs. Wren varies the stories of her nephew with those of raid nights, when the shrapnel of the barrage rattled upon the roof of our theater as the actors continued in their rôles, the British audience remaining firmly in their seats. The foyers, these nights, were open to the public, and soon filled with a controlled mob, forgetting the terror outside as they peered through the glass door at the lesser show upon the stage. Every attaché of the theater has his story of these raids, but the door-man tops them all in the recounting of his trip home on one of these memorable nights, choosing, as a fearless ex-policeman should,

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the top of an omnibus where, of a sudden-like, a gentleman seated directly in front burst all over him.

I have now upon my mantel-shelf a Toby jug, the gift of a good woman who has scrubbed the old oaken steps of our theater for thirty years. I put upon her finger one day the ring of one who had worn it on the battle-field over which her son had fought. For she had no keepsake of her lost boy—no canteen, identity disk, or shred of clothing. For a year he was dead to her, killed, as his captain had reported, and then, quite recently, so that we Americans all shared in her bewilderment and concern, came a card from a German hospital. It was a card of almost a year ago, on which the boy had written for fruit. And at the bottom of his message the German nurse had added that the next day this prisoner had died. It must be that, until a short time ago, the nurse had not looked over her effects, and, finding the post-card, sent it on. I gave the mother the ring on the day she came to ask if I advised her to 'ope. I took it from my finger as I advised her *not* to hope, and I trust I may be forgiven for painting the skill and kindness of German nurses and doctors in more glowing colors than a pro-Ally should. If the old lady found no room in her worn heart for belief she made a place for gratitude, and her prized Toby jug is now mine.

So the play goes on. We step from the brilliant blaze of the stage to the great, dignified dark places behind the canvas walls, dotted with broken men bent uncomplainingly to their task. And when the royalties have gone and the house is black save for the light of the stage-door, we pass by old Ned the fireman, white-haired, aged, smiling, ever

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smiling. Only once could I stumble out, "I'm awfully sorry about your boy," and old Ned permitted himself, "Not even a grave, ma'am," then continued smiling.

So out in the night from the House of Mirth—the House of Contrasts—or is it not the House of Pain?

Chapter XV

BEECHEY says, if one hasn't the money to shop in the spring, one should fall in love, and that made me nervous, for she was without money, the dog never having paid for its portrait except in grateful tail-waggings. I told her to wait a little while until I could look around, as I could not trust her judgment. She would be sure to choose a gentleman because he was paintable or looked like Sargent. In the mean time, we would shop together, visiting only those agreeable places where you were not solicited to spend any money.

Most of the big shops nowadays have adopted the American fashion of leaving you to wander at will without the sensation that the house detective is following you about, ready to pounce upon you if a purchase is not made immediately. We go for preference to Knightsbridge, as it fills the imagination to be buying boudoir-caps in such a neighborhood. Where are the knights? Where is the bridge that they rode across? Where is the stream that the bridge spanned, over which the knights rode? Don't any one tell me. Leave it to my pleasant imaginings—but how glibly we use the word now without analysis!

We know only one knight in this district, but we have friends all along the way, mostly the little dogs of the blind men. One of these blind men used to go

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down on the top of the bus with me, the boy who leads him to his place of business on the sidewalk sitting with his patron while his sort of fox-terrier sat with me on my fur coat. I don't know how long his master has been in the blind business, but he was not always so, for he once told the boy, who was new to the world, that he had helped build the big shops, and most of 'em had begun with nothing at all. It was encouraging to know that something could be evolved out of nothing at all, but it accounted for this obvious adding on of wings, and different levels, and lifts that take you to one department, but shut you off from another on the same floor; staircases that lead up, but won't go down to the streets, and dress-goods that are on one side of the road refusing to have anything to do with trimmings on the other. In America we would tear down everything and begin over again, but here all is gradual growth, and while this is complicating and irritating, it is their way, and I don't have to shop here if I don't want to.

I don't always hold this tolerant thought as I always should. But I get into a fine rage over other Americans who refuse to lend themselves to the manners of the country they visit. We of the United States are sometimes laughed at in Europe for our active sightseeing, but surely the most maddening of all tourists must be such of us as refuse to see. "Strand Americans," I call them. They sit in the lobbies of the big hotels in the Strand and groan because everything isn't just as it is in the country they have left. With a history to dig into which makes the wildest fiction tame, a history illustrated by palaces and castles, churches and picture-galleries, country inns and joy-rides, history that can be learned

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without any strain on the intellect—all they have to do is look, and the looking is beautiful—they relieve the tedium of a London day by steady attendance at a cinema.

"What did you see this afternoon?" I asked one pretty girl, feeling virtuous myself, as I had just come from Westminster.

"Charlie Chaplin—immense!" was her answer.

One doesn't have to have friends in London to keep occupied, but now that my visiting-list is a long one, sightseeing is not of the vigorous quality that it was once over here, and I suppose my day during this visit is about what the average London householder embraces. Besides little dog-friends in Knightsbridge we have two-legged ones whom we know well enough to drop in on. You have to know them pretty well to drop in for tea, and if I have one criticism to make of delightful English ways, it is this business of engaging you far ahead for the tea-hour and holding it as inviolable as a formal dinner. An opportunity may present itself that will bring the expected guest a less ephemeral enjoyment, but a cup of tea for which you have contracted ten days before stands squarely in the middle of the afternoon.

The talk is always good at these teas, however, although if I haven't got my sugar I set my cup aside. No one nags at me for not drinking—I was invited at the tea-hour, not necessarily to drink tea. Always I looked around to see if there was anything eligible for Beechey's springtime, as men come to these parties and do not roar for a cocktail. And, of course, I continued searching for an Englishwoman who would call me by my first name without dying of embarrassment. I had known so many of them for so many



COUNTRY INNS AND JOY-RIDES—HISTORY WITHOUT ANY STRAIN
ON THE INTELLECT



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years, and loved them so much, and I was still Mrs. Closser-Hale.

Strangely enough, the very one I picked out to call me Louise I met in a lovely studio in Knightsbridge. It was in the spring, so I suppose we make friends at the budding hour just as we find best young men. Yes, and she now calls me Louise, although she is more brash with the name when she writes it down in notes. It is pleasant to reflect, however, that she will be calling me by my first name for ever and a day, and not returning as early as August to the more formal address, as some lovers do. That is one of the joys of friendship. All demonstrative signs of it are hurriedly put aside when one takes on a love-affair, yet the friendship is not forgotten; just laid on a shelf for safe-keeping, perhaps. And when the lover slips away with the season, the more stable form of affection is found, as glowing as ever, impervious to the chill of winter.

I wish more women had the talent—and the courage—for making warm, personal friends of men. It takes talent, but it must be cultivated. The mean art of coquetry which we for long believed to be the only allure to hold the animal is no part of that talent. It would frighten them and they would bound away. And it takes courage, for half the world will believe she is trying to ensnare him, and our pride is so immense, especially when we are not much loved. Yet I think the disquiet in many a woman's lonely breast would be allayed if she had the simplest of companionship with some one not of her sex. And how nice it would be for him! He could spend hours telling her all about his love-affairs.

The fiction-writer would have these two fall in

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love, but the qualities of mind and heart that would bring them together have nothing to do with passion. I knew one man and woman, after years of friendship, to expand, as they first called it, into a closer association, and the world stopped for them. They had nothing to talk about, nothing to laugh at. Very wonderfully they forswore each other, with enthusiasm, and went back to being friends once more. But some of us would have shattered the amethystine vase.

The pursuit of a young man for Beechey very nearly ruined my prospects of the acquirement of an English-woman friend for me, and that they were not ruined, that she did develop into a friend, may have been for the reason that she turned out to be a Canadian. While you are in the United States you may think there is not much difference between an English-woman and a Canadian, but over here you find that it is an abyss not to be spanned by bridges of airships.

This lady, after seeing the play, had sent me a letter to the theater, signing a name that we all know in fiction, and wondering if London was too great for us to meet, and behold! she was my neighbor, living behind a very clean green door across the square. I was anxious to meet her and make a good impression, which meant conducting myself with decorum up to and during the first *rencontre*. If you ever become a friend to an Englishwoman, you can do any scandalous thing afterward you please. "She is my friend," the Englishwoman will say, and therefore must be right.

But on the night before I was to juggle with the tea-cup, thin bread and butter, jam (perhaps), sugar (barely probable), and elegant conversation, an American presented himself at our stage-door with a letter

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of introduction which pronounced him to be a bachelor, a New York business man, and therefore excellent for Beechey. I reviewed the costume Beechey had worn at dinner, and would probably be wearing on my return. It was a dull blue, smocked wherever possible, with sandals worn over a pair of my silk stockings, the whole effect quite appealing—according to my theory of opposites—to a New York business man very natty in correct evening dress.

I decided to invite him home, although I could not think of anything for supper except cold haddock, but if we waited long enough, Beechey would bring up the chafing-dish, bring up the methyated spirits, set fire to the table-cloth, spill the milk, do all those engaging things that should attract a man who never had a spot on his shirt-front in his life, with the effort ending in a *mélange* which Beechey called a cheese *fondue*. Therefore I asked him to drive home in my four-wheeler, which might be induced to wait and take him back again to the Ritz.

It ended in dismissing the growler and driving home in his own motor, the largest one in the world. I was quite apologetic when I realized the enormity of his general scheme of living. I warned him that he would find it dull in Chelsea, but he replied easily that no doubt two Americans could stir things up even in a Chelsea Square. I should have got down then and there and taken the Tube, for with his smiling assurance a conviction came to me that this kind of young American was sure to stir up things, whether he meant to or not. And while I admired it, I would prefer the stir to take place in our own country.

It began quietly enough—the stir. The chauffeur admitted when we reached the house that the lights

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were low and it would take some few minutes to look after the batteries. "Will it make a noise?" I asked, for an English conservatism was creeping over me. I could hear the N. Y. B. M. (New York business man) chuckle as I asked the question. But the driver's reply was reassuring. The next mild commotion was calling for Beechey, to be answered by angry Pomeranians, for no artistic mousey-eyed girl came to greet us, and, upon feeling my way in and leading the N. Y. B. M., both of us falling unpropitiously over the ancient wedding-chest, a note was discovered to the effect that she had gone to spend the night with a sick friend.

Beechey had placed the note where I would be most apt to see it. It was stabbed down to the cold haddock with a hair-pin! I did not know, until recriminations set in upon her return next day, that the hair-pin was taken from a new packet, and my supper guest will never know. Strictly speaking, I should not call him my supper guest, as he ate no supper after discovering the impaled fish. Although he laughed a good deal, I found it difficult to outline to him Beechey's delicious qualities and appearance, with only the hair-pin episode for him to build on. As I saw him, alert, successful, anxious in his newness to be correct, I wondered what he would do to a wife who pinned notes to fish for his New York supper friends to see, even as I did not have to wonder how the leading man would act when I recounted this discovery of my midnight visitor. For he became a midnight visitor, and an after-midnight visitor, and still the ignition remained unresponsive. Toward one o'clock the chauffeur rapped a perfectly new rap with the knocker, awakening the dog next door, the

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Pomeranians, and my landlady, to say he would have to go to the garage for assistance.

"Perhaps," I suggested to the N. Y. B. M., "you would like to walk down?"

"Walk! I don't know the way," he protested.

I forebore to tell him that I had a map, and on we plunged into conversational depths. We gave to each other slices of our history that up till then had been a secret, not divulging this decause we found ourselves affinities, but for the terridle reason that the coal-scuttle was empty, the oil stove was smelling, and we were talking against time. By two o'clock that morning I was ready, with an understanding hitherto denied me, to make allowances for the indiscretions of many characters in fiction stranded on islands or missing last trains. I would tell this man anything to keep him interested. I would make up anything. At two-fifteen, as I was about to engage him with the information that none of my family could read or write, and two of them were hanged, the silence of our correct little square was broken by a series of explosions. We both thought of air raids, and wondered if the Huns had come over for a last shoot-up. Neither of us cared, so long as one or the other was killed. The New York business man dismissed this pleasing hope first. Yet a satisfaction crept over his tired face, for it was his car waking up my Chelsea Square.

We rushed to the window and saw, wheeling around a far corner, his huge leviathan hitched to one even greater, a truck of vast proportions, making a tour of our park with the evident idea of turning the engine over by the rapidity of motion. The muffler was cut out, blue fire blazed from beneath both chassis, and the explosions were continual. Around and around

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these mad joy-riders went. We could see lights appear at upper windows, and heads stuck out, like the scene from "The Mastersingers." The house of the correct novelist on whom I was to call became a blaze of inquiring lights.

"You must go home," I sternly told my guest.

"I can't," he replied. "I can't go down to the Ritz on a battery in action."

"You can detach the truck and ride down in it."

"To the *Ritz*!"

"Then sit in your car and let the truck tow you down."

"How would it look?"

"I don't care how it looks," I snapped. "How does this look?"

"I don't know how it looks. It sounds like Fourth of July."

"Then go outside and enjoy yourself," I contended, crossly. "I am sorry, but for the sake of appearances I can't have you staying here any longer." There was no reason why I should not exhibit my temper before this young man; I had revealed everything else in my life to him.

He behaved remarkably, as if he were confused, not at my bad temper, for he expected nothing of a family who couldn't read or write and had mostly died on the gallows, but, rather, at the evidences of my moral worth. "I thought you were a Bohemian," he stammered.

I felt hopeless. "East is East and West is West," passed through my mind. Because Beechey had stabbed the fish with a hair-pin, because I was on the stage, because we do many unconventional things in life, since we haven't the money to be conventional

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and comfortable at the same time, the "outsider" (as the theater calls the humble business man) thinks we haven't any laws of any kind.

They don't understand at all—they never will. If they did they wouldn't be business men, so kind and able, and helping us out of many difficulties by their advice. They would be artists like ourselves, and we would all starve to death in a week or so, for there would be no one to purchase our wares. My mind raced on. Suppose Beechey had met and, of course, married him? Suppose they had had a little son with his mother's love of painting, whom his father insisted on putting in the business. What a heartbreak that would be for the boy, and for Beechey, and for the father, as the lad would never make a business man.

So my answer to his query would have been oracular to him if the engine had not turned over at that especial moment. For, thinking of Beechey, I ejaculated, fervently, "Saved!" and the New York business man let his eye rest pityingly upon my ancient frame under the impression that I was referring to the preservation of my good name.

The truck was detached, and his big motor purred at the door. I was speeding the parting guest as speedily as I could, piloting him around that sneering wedding-chest, and while I couldn't see his face, his cordial voice still rang out cheerfully to the further annoyance of the Poms, "I said two Americans would stir things up, didn't I?"

"You stirred up more than a noise," was my farewell.

I suppose he thought it was my aged heart, but it wasn't. It was a question as to the fallibility of my Theory of Opposites.

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The next day, when I called upon my neighbor (the stranger, upon invitation, calls first in this country), the butler said she was not at home, which did not surprise me at all, but he added that I must come up, anyway, as I was expected. Her delay may have been one way of expressing her disapproval, yet she was not unrepresented in that pleasant drawing-room which looked out upon the stubborn plane-trees, refusing to leaf, over toward our purple door. Another woman who writes and whom Americans read was waiting also, and as she had not kicked up any kind of rumpus the night before the tardiness of the hostess was probably not a punishment.

I liked this woman immediately, and hoped she would become, possibly, a second English friend who would call me Louise. She had been to see our play, and said the right things about it—only actors can say the right things about a play, as a rule—more than that, she was not hidebound by conservatism. She fought against it with all the power she could summon, hampered, as she was, by an Oxford accent. She told me of her little son, who had wanted the umbrella up because the other people in the street had their umbrellas up. She said they walked the full length of the street after that, although it did begin to rain, to encourage his individualism. "We are doing it because it is different," she told his correct little self.

This pleased but confused me. It confused me, too, the way she answered questions with her Oxford voice. She never said yes or no. She said, "I did," or "I did not," and I could no more analyze it than I could my sudden heaping of confidences upon her, not because it was past midnight, but for the reason

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that she seemed enormously interested in me. She laughed at my jokes, too. When a writer smiles cautiously at your humor you had better hurry it into print before he gets ahead of you. But if he laughs he is enjoying the moment, and will forget. It is hard to store up and laugh at the same time.

I found out the cause of this sudden precipitation of myself at this lady and of her unembarrassed acceptance of my confidences. I had found it out after the hostess came in, gay and apologetic, and perfectly delighted over the noise of the night before. Nothing so exciting had happened since the great fog, she said, when a bus turned into the square and kept creeping around under the impression that it was twisting along the highway. "My husband was one of the passengers, too, wondering when he was going to get home. The petrol gave out, and they settled down in front of our house. He went to sleep, and when the fog lifted at dawn I discovered him, and sent out a tin of hot shaving-water. He said he had known funnier things—but then, he is English."

"Aren't you?"

In this way I learned that she was Canadian, and my other new acquaintance in the room was—why didn't I realize it before?—Irish! Unless our Irish friends speak with a brogue as thick as the Russell brothers, we Americans find them only through the warm, uneven qualities of their hearts. I use "uneven" wrongly perhaps. Their race partizanship is so intense that the Irish may be fiercely on your side so long as you are on their side, but diverge by so much as a laughing criticism of their own people and they are arrayed against you in a tumult of words.

I met a young Dublin University man who was once

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a papist, now is no longer a papist, and will probably send for the priest and the holy oils when he hears the wings of Death. He asked me whether I had ever been granted an audience with the Holy Father, and I answered him as one practical American would speak to another. I told him that "I had tickets for Leo, but didn't get up."

He clasped his hand to his forehead. "Oh, you Americans! The like of a circus! Tickets for Leo, tickets for Leo—and didn't get up!"

But had he announced *he* had tickets for Leo it would have been all right. It was his Pope, and he could say what he liked about him.

I determined that I would take no chances with my new Irish friend, although she showed a detached point of view as to the Irish question that encouraged agreement with her. I remember on that first afternoon our speaking of the patience of English crowds, how submissively they allowed themselves to be packed upon a sidewalk to watch a passing show in the street which only those at the curb would really see. It would not be so in Ireland, she had said. "It would not?" "It would not," she replied. "Every man of them who couldn't see would be making a speech against those who could. By the time the King came along they would all be fighting, and no one would know that he had passed."

"They are always fighting, aren't they?" I said, smiling agreeably.

"They are not," with a flash of the eye.

I had spoken of the crowds of Maundy Thursday who had packed around Westminster Abbey in the faint hope, perhaps, that the King's dole of silver might be extended to others than the selected poor

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within. On this day I but stuck my nose in the Abbey, and saw over the heads of the people the lances of the Yeomen of the Guard as they escorted His Majesty toward a number of old folk slicked up for the occasion who were decided by the parish to be worthy of the gift.

Just why this honor should fall upon the parish of Westminster I don't know (and where is Eastminster, by the way? And Middleminster? And Minster Center?), but I should think all the old 'uns of London would move into the neighborhood, and by a combination of extreme poverty and extreme piety hope for individual preferment before they die. For the Maundy Thursday dole will go on as long as British sovereigns endure, and every year the reporters will write of it just as they yearly chronicle the spring, the last snowfall, the first cuckoo, the Derby, the opening of the shooting season, ditto of Parliament, and the endless round of what has always been. The contemplation of these reportorial duties staring an English journalist in his morning face must make him more perfectly comprehend the Frenchman who cut his throat at the prospect of taking off his shoes and stockings every night and putting them on every morning.

I like old customs, but this faint replica of the humble duties of our Lord is one that could be more honored in the breach than the observance. At least, I should imagine King George would feel that way, yet it could be worse for him. Among the few sovereigns that are left upon the face of Europe some are busily engaged on Maundy Thursday scrubbing feet. I did not scrub feet, but I had a matinée for Lenten penance, and I edged out of the crowd nervously and

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sought the doorway leading from the cloisters, a sort of stage-door of the Abbey, through which the King was to come out. It is the only entrance used by royalty that does not bother with a red carpet—even Buckingham Palace runs its strip down to the gravel. I speculated upon the possible indignation of the royalties within when their sole-leather would astonishingly conflict with cold stone. "What! No red carpet!" an earlier monarch might have exclaimed. "Off with his head!"

Yet even they would not have exclaimed it aloud. It is something for the scoffer of whatever gods there be to dwell upon: this fear of vain kings of the condemnation of the Church, and of their penances when they flouted it, and of the deference they tremblingly paid to little priests of small beginnings who bravely attacked them. Even that man of earth, Henry VIII, dared not break away entirely from ecclesiastical forms, and had the Church of England all neatly established before moving out of the house of the Popes—and taking his wives with him.

This fateful thought came to me as I waited for the King along with the photographers and a little knot of men and women, and with a wave of comic despair I realized that even the Church of England had for a background the love of man for woman. I find I have recorded in my line-a-day journal, "One might think on Maundy Thursday at Westminster I could escape this sex business, but if it hadn't been for Anne Boleyn there wouldn't have been any Abbey at all."

It was very sweet and springlike in this courtyard, with the trim houses of ecclesiastics all about and neat maids going in and out the archway, as

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though there was no domestic problem for them, and heaven was their home. A whole ton of coal lumbered in, and we all looked at it enviously. I forbore to ask if it was to be a present to the King. Indeed it was the only ton of coal I have seen treated contemptuously. For the chief detective, in a beautifully braided coat, said it couldn't wait there among the royal carriages, and off it rumbled, very hurt, under the impression that it was the real King Cole.

I interrogated the old coachman of one of the royal carriages that remained triumphant, asking him if any one else ever painted their carriage with the deep-red body and scarlet lines of royalty, and he replied, "Never, madam," very fervently. "But what if they would?" I pursued. And he gathered up his reins and drove his horses out of the area of such disturbing thoughts.

Abashed by the royal coachman, I merged myself in the little crowd who were whispering among themselves in that hushed way people do when waiting for sovereigns. Two women were talking together about a third—oh, undoubtedly about a third, for the import of their words was mighty: "They can't afford another; they can't afford it!"

"They couldn't afford the first—yet every spring—" She sounded a "tek-tek" of disapproval. It made me sorry for this third woman who wasn't there. Why is it, when all the wonders of spring are so welcome, that a baby, the greatest wonder of all, can't be as eagerly watched for? Why can't all earth's greenery be as tenderly nurtured as the young trees in a city's park? What is a country's yearly forestry bill and the yearly bill for that country's unwanted little ones? Again one speculates.

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The royal family were coming out. The coachmen removed their hats, still wonderfully manipulating the reins. The photographers advanced, lifting their bowlers also, and begged for pause. The family took leave of the Dean as the little cranks of the moving-picture apparatuses made history. The institution of the photographic machine is now quietly accepted as part of every ceremony. There is no longer surprise or bridling, or vexed impatience. We have washed feet, opened Parliament, become a Fishmonger or a Cloth Draper or a Mason, and now we stand for a minute while this process of absolute confirmation is being employed.

Old fighting warriors who don't care twopence about their pictures stand submissively before going into battle, and the wounded lift their heads from their cots and take an interest with a dying smile. The only voices recently raised in protest were those at the Foundling Hospital when lusty-lunged babies roared in unison at a flashlight, while their own Queen Mary held the most indignant of them in her arms. When they are grown-up foundlings and view this moving picture—if indeed it is still moving—they will take shame of themselves at this unique display of concerted cavernous mouths.

But that was the end of Maundy Thursday for me. I caught a taxi and reached the theater just as they were again growing anxious, so perhaps it was as well that only one member of the company cared to see the sights of London Town. Yet I had been but once before to the Abbey on this visit, for now that I was part of London I no longer sat in the Poets' Corner and tried to think thoughts. On this occasion tickets admitted the American novelist and myself to the

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Poets' Corner, and we walked around the little door of the south transept by Parliament Yard. There was a great yellow motor at the door, from which an American woman married to a nobleman was descending. But most of us were on foot, and looking very much like what we were—Americans. For this was the day of the prayers for our dead.

All through February and March various services had been held *in memoriam* for men fallen in battle. A great gathering had been held at St. Paul's for the journalists and writers, and a lesser one at the Abbey for the British actors, which I had wanted mightily to attend. But that was the day we wore our make-ups through the noon hours while flashlight pictures were taken of our play, and unresistingly we went to the theater, just as those six hundred fallen actors would have done had they been summoned. It was at least our line of duty.

The church on the day for our dead was packed by a solemn mass of men and women from over the water. I didn't know there could be so many, but I understand that there were twenty thousand working here on various missions during the war. There was the glitter of admirals and generals before the high altar, and the brighter colors of the representatives of powers and potentates. Our soldiers and sailors filed in methodically, fine, grim boys, and I wondered how any one could be but glad that they were still alive; yet I have heard a man deplore that we Americans had not suffered more. Hasn't the world had its full quota of pain—can any one wish for a greater killing of any human beings or poor dumb beasts of any country—even their ally, America?

The enormous dignity of the service filled me with

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awe, yet we of the United States, crude, new, anxious, were not unfitted to the wide spaces of a cathedral. Other pilgrims have bowed before this altar, and they were simple people, too. Never for centuries have they been turned away from this House of God, and on this day we were gathered to say a prayer, not for ourselves, but for the men who knew the wider spaces of our great out-of-doors.

It is when I am in an ancient building of an older civilization than ours that always there recurs to me pictures of our open plains, our farthest mountains, and tall pines of the Northwest. For I find these buildings and these visions similar, not contrasting. Once I asked a Roman prince whom I met in a Western mining-camp if he did not honestly miss the pomp and age-old beauty of his father's house, and he said that he never missed them so long as he worked in the open and slept under the stars.

Just so, in some teasing way, through the intoning of the service, the swell of the organ, the chant of the singers, my mind reverted to the army posts of the Far West, of the cool of the evening at the fringe of our deserts, of the morning light on our highest mountain peaks. It came insistently and comfortingly, as though the early makers of the Abbey could more understandingly embrace our unformed new nation than can these exquisite peoples of later years.

The service drew to its close. From some place high, high up in the vaulted edifice British buglers sounded the Last Call for our American men. I may never hear more celestial music, yet the echo that came to my ears was the faint "taps" sounded over a sandy grave which—I could see quite plainly—lay in some sweet open place at home.

Chapter XVI

AFTER Maundy Thursday came, as inevitable as the seasons, Good Friday, variously observed by various people, and joyfully all mine, for in London on that day theaters are closed and I could roam through the hours without a watch in my hand.

Did I go to church? No, I did not go to church. For it was spring, it was full-throated spring. The trees were green, the sun did shine, there were seats, wonderfully enough, on the top of a bus that led to Hampstead Heath, and Beechey and I went out to enjoy the crowd gathering for Easter Monday while they could yet be enjoyed. Easter Monday was a Bank Holiday, which I suppose, upon analysis, means that the banks are closed. Although up to this very moment I have interpreted "bank" as the kind whereon the wild thyme grows. As all London flies to these sweet slopes much more affectionately than they do to the granite buildings—even to draw money—it is not a very serious misreading of a national holiday.

A crowd is good, but one can have too much of a good thing, and by Monday it would have been impossible. Already one mother with a trail of crying children had found it too much. She was waiting at the Heath to pack them on to the bus as we descended. "Never agyne," she was exclaiming as I helped the

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weeping ones on, "never agyne. I says it every year." I thought how often we say "Never agyne," every spring we say it, and when we have grown too old for the exclamation we feel the loss of that very ache in our hearts, and scratch around among the young for vicarious romances.

Oh, I was broken on the wheel by the time spring came singing into England, for one cannot love life and not want those in life to be loved each after his own fashion and according to his years. But I had to come to England to find that out. When I was not planning a love-affair for Beechey I was sizing up the landlady, with very little to encourage me. Mrs. Hacking, when not mourning for her husband, was—so the village of London gossiped—carrying on with a potman who is the gentleman wot washes the glasses at a pub—the pub where my shillings were changed to pennies for the gas-meter every noon. I was enjoying this form of romantic activity, and knew I must no longer oppose it, for the fruit of the tree is knowledge, and I had eaten of the fruit. And there is a certain pleasure to be derived from disseminating for the good of others that which you yourself have acquired through various painful bites of the apple.

Now, the disseminating of wisdom can be a stodgy business, made up of don'ts to be found in the back of any dictionary, or it may be a real exercise of sympathies, and therein lies whatever of the game there is for us old 'uns. It is something to say, with the esthetic Hedda Gabler, if you have been busting up Love's Young Dream, at least you have done it beautifully.

The opportunities were rich on Good Friday. No

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sooner had we reached the first "Cokernut-Shy" than we ran across a baronet we knew. It was no place to meet a baronet, according to novels, but he was taking his little dog out for a walk, so that it could grow accustomed to its muzzle. A new edict has gone forth this spring that all dogs must be muzzled all the time. With the Briton's trained acceptance of a ruling the people stormed the shops upon the dogs' last glad day, great queues were waiting for muzzles, and proud canines, like our Poms, sat up as late as midnight waiting for the exhausted muzzle man to come and measure them.

"We have our muzzles made to order," I heard them barking to the little wiry-haired fellow next door, who wore a hand-me-down. Even their fond mistress stopped their boasting, for we were all troubled over the dog next door. It was rumored his folks never took his muzzle off, as it was too much bother, and my kind landlady was conniving to buy him through a medium unknown to her neighbor. But this indifference to the welfare of dumb beasts is more rare in England than in America. A driver on the street can never lay a lash across the back of his horse without a cry of protest from the pavement. Old ladies at first attack him, and dignified gentlemen afterward, with badges under their coats. They may beat their wives, according to old English law, but there is no law permitting the beating of animals.

Yet, if they are fond of their dogs, they must be proportionately considerate of their wives, and it occurred to me—hopeful as Young April—while we strolled around with the baronet, he stopping continually to caress his little dog, which had an idea it was being punished with facial solitary confinement,

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that Beechey would do well to marry one of these Englishmen of birth. They are accustomed to queer birds. Artists were always in attendance at the court of English sovereigns; the literary man dedicated his book to a titled patron, who graciously accepted it and bestowed a few guineas on the scribe. Portrait commissions were as ingenuously procured. There was no contempt in this recognition of talent by a purse. It was not thrown to a minion. It pleased the noble to have men of arts and letters about him. He would probably accept even the fish harpooned by a hair-pin, for, through the centuries, he had been accustomed to have these fish-harpooners at his table. And oh, best of all English traits! he, unlike the New York business man, would not attempt to make the artist over into a nobleman. He would be the nobleman for the family—he would want to be.

I looked at our baronet strolling along with Beechey. For centuries he had strolled, and the Lord knows Beechey could stroll, too. In a faint way I was preserving my Theory of Opposites, even as I yielded a point or two in the direction of aimless pedic correlations. I was very happy, and went at the Cokernut-Shy with a fierceness of attack that amused my friends. They little knew that I had arranged with myself that if I could hit three cocoanuts out of five, they were going to marry each other.

That I did not hit any at all was not entirely discouraging. I had chosen a Shy that was not prosperous in appearance. Its patronage was slim, and there was no air of success in the monkey faces on the nuts. They did not grin. Why, at a fair, does the public patronize one booth and pass by another offer-

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ing the same wares? The sign of Cokernut-Shies was just as alluringly painted across this alley as the others, the black-robed woman in attendance more appealing than the rougher men at the thriving booth next door. Even the coster-girl farther along, in lovely pinks and mauves, with a small round waist and full bosom, was not doing a good business. These instances make one believe in luck, and if in luck, in horseshoes, and hats on beds, and peacock feathers; then the Evil Eye, and on down to witches, with approval for their dire fate, for if you believe in one you can believe in all. Or is there a real cosmic force that arrests the feet of the passer-by at one Cokernut-Shy and sends him indifferently past the next?

I was glad to lose to my woman in mourning, although I was sorry not to marry Beechey to the baronet. I decided I would arrange it later with a crystal-gazer, and in the mean time, as the proprietress had won my silver, she was willing to talk to me, and I was soothed by her acknowledgment that they all made some money out of the Shy, even last year, when cocoanuts cost thirty-six cents apiece. Still—with a roll of the eye—some did better than others. She was carrying on her 'usband's business. "The Somme got 'im—blast it!" And I suppose that gentle river will ever be pictured to many thousands as a hungry monster greedy for blood.

Before we went on to "Little Mary," which, for the sake of the baronet, I hastened to say had nothing to do with our stomachs, I asked the proprietress why the signs were all spelled "cokernut" and she replied because they *were* cokernuts. So I suppose the cockney must be conscious of his own accent, and when he reads at all must read as he pronounces. I myself

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recognize the letter "r" I put in *wash* if, as Oscar Wilde says, "if I listen attentively," but there has been no inclination to slip the oral evidence of the Middle West into the written word. I don't write "warsh-day"—it's enough to have to say it.

And that takes me off at such a tangent that I may never get back to "Little Mary, only twenty-six inches tall, and alive." But it has occurred to me a hundred times that any two nations who read the same language, if that language is their own, should never be alien to each other. Let us take an English novel written by one of the splendid school of young writers over here at present. That novel is broad in its appreciation of the pain of the world—not of the pain of England, but of all countries. The characters talk as we in America do, barring the slang which emanates always from the conditions of a narrow environment. They conduct themselves as we do, laugh over the same situations, weep over the same losses. We read the phrasing to ourselves in—yes—in American, and it is real to us.

Yet, when we Americans meet the English we are confounded by the rising inflection of their voices. We put down their accent, possibly developed by climatic conditions, to a self-sufficiency that maddens us. We read into their soaring voices a superiority of ideas which we, a newer nation and conscious of our newness, resent. We called it "side" once, "swank" it would be in this day. Personally, I have no patience with this. If we listened more to *what* the English say and less to the *way* they say it, we would be obliged to admit that we were at one in the deeper phases of life.

To this day, when I become overpowered by seem-

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ingly superficial English intonations, I fly home to read Wells and George, Richard Pryce and Stacy Aumonier, Swinnerton and Bennett, and all the young men whose pages faithfully reflect the present-day English values, and yet whose ideas on the printed leaf can be transcribed easily into the Hoosier dialect of the reader. Try it. For, as I grow more and more fond of English life, I offer this for your digestion. It isn't their fault they are a thousand years old, any more than it is mine that I say "warsh" for "wash." They are worse off than I am, for I'll get over "warsh," but they'll only add to their thousand years.

The baronet, who didn't want his dog to bark at dwarfs—he was accustomed to tall Englishmen—did not pay twopence, as we did, to see "Little Mary, only twenty-six inches tall, and alive." He waited outside and watched those who were rich enough circle about on the painted animals of the merry-go-rounds. He was not alone in watching, a crowd of those who had not the sum to cater to this new form of profiteering (a shilling a go, *hif* you please) forgathered with him and scornfully yelled "Munitions!" to the wealthy ones who could so spend twelvenpence. Of course the baronet did not yell, any more than he did not offend us by paying fourpence for us to see "Little Mary." That would not have been baronial. American money went to the side-shows, and I had sixpence all ready besides to give to the little creature.

But the little creature didn't want it, as Mary was a tiny pony, twenty-six inches high, and alive, and we crept out with the guilty look on our faces which simple, kindly people always wear when they are deceived. A knot of girls with no pence to spare for their fairing had gathered outside to see what effect

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the peep-show had upon us. "Is it wuth it?" one girl asked, and while it was only four cents, that meant a great deal to her, and she was advised to remain away. Still, I don't know why a charming normal pony shouldn't be as "wuth" it as a hideous abnormal dwarf, but we must have our senses shocked for real enjoyment. The jaunt ended in a taxi, with the baronet gone off on a real walk of about ten miles, and a glass of light refreshment enjoyed by the chauffeur as well as ourselves at The Spaniards. The driver brought the ale to us and as we sipped it—he gulped his—informed us that "Dickings" had written a book there. I think he wrote the book near by, but it was a pleasant locality to do a book, and as they say Dickens loved his characters, I suppose the combination of inn and loved ones made the labor of writing fairly endurable. I cannot imagine any one liking to write a book, even when it is full of Me, with the I's flying along like telegraph-poles, and I sympathize with Mr. St. John Ervine, who slaps down "The End" and cries: "There! I am through with you, you brutes!"

But it was uncommonly lovely upon the Heath, with London like a scarred bowl of dullest metal beneath us, and my heart swelled with gratitude that I had been able to visit many lands, and then salve my conscience for the expense incurred by writing about them. It turns a writer on travel subjects cold to think what a bore he may become. There was a man on shipboard once, the kind you never meet on dry land, fortunately. He was a buyer of chinaware, and he said his greatest delight was going to call on folks in his little home town who had never been able to go anywhere, and tell them all about the

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pleasant things he had seen. I can imagine how thoroughly he must have been hated, can see the stifled yawns, and smell the lamp burning low. "Well, well," the hostess says, with a sort of upward movement of her body in an effort to suggest an evacuation of chairs and the ensuing departure of the guest. But at the risk of having this very book thrown at me, I cannot but wish that all Americans could have at least one spring in England.

Not that it is any more beautiful than our spring, but the passionate appreciation of the people for the tender green, for the repainted chairs in the park, the change of bathing hours in the Serpentine, the first straw hat, prove them to be as emotional as are we, even if it takes the sun to draw it out. And if two nations read the same literature and enjoy the same emotions, they are not really very far apart.

It was the baronet who started these reflections. He had begged Beechey if he could be impertinent and followed it up by asking her if she liked Wilson. Beechey, being patriotic without analysis, promptly said she did because he was her President. I said I hadn't at first, but the longer I stayed in England the more I was growing to like him. "You enrage me so by your opposition, I cannot help it," I completed.

"But he's always talkin' about ideals," from the baronet.

"Well, why shouldn't he?" answered Beechey. "The trouble with you English is you don't believe in anything you haven't got."

In astonishment, dog and baronet stopped as one man. "Not have ideals? Certainly we have 'em; we believe in 'em. We've had 'em for so long and believe in 'em so much that they're nothing new to us.

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We take 'em for granted. We don't feel it's decent to talk about 'em. It would be like taking off your garments before a crowd."

Dog, baronet, Beechey, and myself walked on. There was something in this.

But come over and see them in the spring. The barriers are down when the rain falls, and they say nothing. I actually saw a baby in a terrific hail-storm in April holding up its face without a whimper to the cutting of the stones. It was probably patriotically crying to itself in baby-talk, "Good old England!" But when the spring sun shines they meet upon the street and burst into ecstasies; they radiate good will toward each other. They don't know it, and they would be awfully ashamed if they ever heard of it, but they are taking off their garments of emotion before a crowd.

How many Good Fridays can the reader recall? I have experienced forty of them—and over. One was at St. Peter's in Rome; one gathered with the multitude at Riverside for the pilgrimage up the mount; one shamelessly playing an extra matinée in a Canadian town, making profit out of our Lord's agony; one motoring through a wide, storm-swept country as desolate as Calvary, by the side of one who is now gone. Yet the Good Friday I remember most clearly was spent posing in a New York studio that I might add to my slender student allowance. All day I posed—exceedingly distressful to me; and for lunch we had two little tins of beans and hot-cross buns sent in from a delicatessen near by. Gone is the picture, the painter, and demolished the old studio, but every Good Friday when I eat my hot-cross buns the dingy scene rises before me, and

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that remote day seems dearer to me than probably it really was.

While there will not be so many Good Fridays to recount from this year on, I think I shall not forget my English one, and that these two will be unblurred by the passing of time. For on the end of this day in London I was able to apply to the comfort of some one younger than myself a sort of crystallization of the knowledge gained of earlier Good Fridays, and all the days between. The school of experience takes no holidays or holy-days.

I was to dine with a young man at the desirable hour of eight, instead of dashing into the black cavern of a theater at seven, seeing no more of the soft twilight. A woman does not appreciate dining at that hour unless she can never do so from one week's end to another. There is a thrill in the wearing of a long-tailed frock with glittering things in the hair. There is a newness all over again in driving off with a young man who is to be your host, even though you know he is going to tell you all about his young lady. Your hair is gray in which the ornaments glitter, therefore it is your pleasure to hear about the young lady. If it is not your pleasure you are an unhappy old woman.

My young man—the young lady's young man—had a touch of melancholy about him. Yet one could put down melancholy to spring zephyrs stirring the young heart, the kind you dare make a jest of, and I dared make a jest of it. We were just going into Hyde Park, I remember, for we had some time to drive about, and the young man behaved remarkably, for he clutched my hands, but impersonally and as one seizes driftwood in a raging sea. Then

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he told me that he was going to die, with several years of pain ahead of him before he died. That had been the verdict of the physicians.

I am sure, I am absolutely sure, it did not first occur to me that this news would spoil our dinner. That came after. After an inability to see this vibrant boy as any one concerned with death.

All sorts of thoughts came between. An immediate wonder, as I looked out upon the wistful youthfulness of the trees, if he could be getting any solace out of the green. Or was it terrible to him, since he might not witness the spectacle of spring again? I did immediately appreciate how my conversational topics would be limited. Could I tell him of Little Mary; would the ideals of a baronet be important to a dying man? Can you turn to one who tells you he has received his death-warrant and ask him what he thinks of the latest Maugham play? To be sure, all of us enter the world with our death-warrant in our tiny claws. But we have not yet learned to read the summons, and as we grow into lusty life, death may be for the next man, but not for us.

On the other hand, I could not go talking through a holiday dinner of his approaching end. It would be too fantastic. Nor could I say, "I am sorry you are going to die," and then praise the fish. Yet, on another hand—on my third hand—since this dinner was arranged especially for me, I must in all decency say something about it.

I did suggest, as we entered the court of the hotel, that we give up the meal altogether, and that he come home with me to cry his heart out if he wanted to. But he looked at me tragically and blurted out, "Oh, I say, it's all ordered." And then almost hysterical

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desperation swept over me, for, in some way, I must enjoy all the dishes, must eat them whether I wanted to or not, yet appear immaterial in my interest. And, most horrible of all, now that the first shock was over I began to realize that I *was* hungry and could eat everything with gusto!

There was nothing of death in the air, although the beautiful young Guardsmen who were filling the restaurant had been shoulder to shoulder with it for four years. They carry with them only the recklessness that accompanies an existence which may speedily cease to be. Once upon a time these men of birth would not have entered a public dining-place with the startlingly pretty women whom they now openly affect. But this very rashness savors of life, eager life in that room of soft lights and music and agreeable food. Life came in at the open windows, the new growth of green branches crisscrossed a sky as rosy as dawn. Old Father Thames himself, lying below us, put off his mud-gray colors and caught the youthful tinge of overhanging clouds.

I prayed to the gods, and a very small one with bird-wings and a bow and arrow fluttered down to help me out. Dinner, after all, was not a failure, for the right subject came to us which had place at this strange banquet; a subject which will have place in a death-chamber, or a christening, or through all the humble offices of the day's régime. This boy and I talked of love—his love and my knowledge of it, gained by bites from the apple in prehistoric days.

He had done some thinking since the verdict of the doctors. He had mapped out his life and hers, and that he had mapped out hers, had dared to arrogate to himself the right to do so, was the matter under

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discussion, under contention through the delicate courses of the meal. I don't recall all we said, but salient points jut out in my memory.

"I've written to her," said the boy. "She is out in Egypt with her father."

"I'm glad you wrote. She'll come right back."

He shook his head. "She won't."

"You don't doubt her?"

A soft look came into his eyes. "Never! But—she doesn't know."

"Doesn't know what?"

"That I'll be going west."

I am glad to record that the morsel of fish with the exquisite sauce lost its flavor momentarily. "What did you tell her?" I demanded.

My host was proud of what he told her, which was nothing at all except that he no longer loved her. He had dismissed her. There was no cruelty in this man. His face was haggard with the conflict that had gone on within him before he had disposed of her love, briefly, by letter. Yet I looked upon him as an enemy alien, an alien to women. "Who are you to regulate her life?"

"I am her fond lover, that's all. I love her enough to give her up. I must love her enough to know what is best for her."

"British!" I ground between my teeth. "She won't believe you."

"I made it plain enough."

"Plain! There is just one way a woman would translate that letter; she'll read another woman into it."

"I don't mind that."

I was annoyed, although the *entrée* that I was just

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attacking was most soothing. "You don't mind it—who are you?"

"I'm the one that's dying."

"And she's the one that's turned aside."

"Would she want to hear I'm dying?"

"Yes," bluntly, without pause.

He sneered at me. "She is different from you. You are one of those brisk Americans."

I continued eating up the *entrée*. It was too good to get angry over. "She is not different; she is the same. That's something I've learned with years. A man's love and a woman's love is measured by the same rod in every country—yes, and by the same system. I wish governments would take that more into account—they'd get along better. You've got to believe me—take some things for granted. A woman cannot be going on fifty, with nothing to show for her briskness, as you call it, but a lot of blank pages. Now the point is, she's got a right to decide for herself."

"In all decency she'd come on and watch me till I die."

"Well, let her; that's her affair."

"Ruin her life?"

I very nearly yelled at him: "Again, who are you to decide what would ruin her life? Do you think those hours by your bedside would be any worse than those hours of shaken faith, and renewed hope, and woman's eternal analyses; worse than her wanderings in mental darkness through those blazing Egyptian days?"

"She'll get over it out there."

"Of course she'll get over it. She'll get over your death, too—don't flatter yourself she won't—and the

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strain of the long hours by your bedside—since you seem to insist she'd have to suffer them. Personally, I don't think you're going to die. The dying aren't so infernally cruel."

His voice broke. "God knows I am doing the best I can for her."

"Yes, God knows, but she doesn't. She might get some inkling of it if you do die. And even then she'll probably think there was another woman, so she'll have two griefs in her heart instead of one."

The boy looked up at me with the first glimmering of respect for my theories in his eyes. "She'll suffer twice as much, you mean? On what do you base all this? I'm ready to listen."

We were not at the *poulet en casserole*. As befitted my years I was able to attack this chicken and enjoy it, even as a sort of miasma of old misery swept over me in the recounting of "those beautiful days, those beautiful days when I was so unhappy." Ah, I never thought during those days that the unhappinesses, not the beauty of them, would have a value!

It was a long course and quite a long story. I had eaten all the chicken before I was through and the asparagus with the *sauce hollandaise*. He kept interrupting, and side issues were fiercely contended, but the talk went something like this: "I knew—somebody—once. He said to me one day, 'I love you, for I am jealous of you.' Then he went away for an hour, as we had arranged, and I never saw him again, except when there were crowds of people about. Not for years, at least—not until it didn't matter.

"He wrote a letter, too—he closed our accounts like a ledger. I wasn't dismissed like a servant, but like a secretary. No. 1: 'I am remaining in the coun-

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try indefinitely.' No. 2: 'The country is no place for you.' No. 3: 'Some day I may go into this with you—not now.'

"Why shouldn't he have gone into it with me? Why should not I have seen the cards? We had played a game together. Why should I be allowed only the backs of the cards while he saw the faces? He was a card-thief—a card-sharper in life. In my life."

"Did you hate him?"

"Not at first. You can't hate all at once. You have to suffer a long time. Besides, you don't want to hate. Fond pictures must grow faint, for a woman feeds on the past longer than a man does. I clung to the pictures, for there was nothing to take their place."

"Did you cry?" (Thinking of his girl, crying in Egypt, of course. He wasn't caring about me.)

"I was too confused. Every minute I thought the situation would be cleared up. But I was lonely. Were you ever lonely?"

His lips were white. "I think I'm going to be."

"She'll be lonely out in Egypt, too. But you'll be more lonely in the city here, because there are so many people about you don't want. Once, I remember, I was standing on the corner of Fifth Avenue and Thirty-fifth Street—just standing there. There must have been a million people up and down that street. I suppose I was in a sort of mental daze—bewilderment does that when long continued—and for an instant I actually thought I was alone in that brilliant street, that the whole length was mine, no people, or motors, or vans, or buses. It was empty just because one man had left me nothing to hold on to. That frightened me. I tried to get over it then."

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"I suppose you thought it was a woman, too?"

"I thought it was a different woman every night. But after a while that didn't make any difference. The point was, I had a right to know whether it was a woman—to know what was back of it all. Why, we had been going to share our whole life together! For his sake there wasn't any condition in existence I wouldn't have accepted if he had been frank with me. I was willing never to see him again if he didn't want to see me. A woman doesn't really want a man if he's over it himself. But the worst pain of all, after a while, was knowing that he wasn't any good or he wouldn't have written that letter. I had been loving some one who wasn't any good. He couldn't even live as a charming memory—all through his clumsy writing."

The boy was snared by this. He wanted to remain charming, yet he fought for himself. "Your friend—er—his motives— After all, they may not have been—oh, well—as fine as mine."

I had finished my chicken, and gave the little frame a pat with my knife as the waiter took it away. "Good-by, old friend," I addressed the little *poulet*. The waiter moved off, scandalized. He little knew what bones I had been picking. "Not as fine as you, did you say? Well, I haven't seen your letter—otherwise just the same."

"He was ill, then?"

"That's all—just ill."

"And you learned the truth when he died?"

"Oh, he didn't die. He got well, as you are probably going to do. Got well, and after coming back to the world, tried to stumble out excuses to an indifferent ear—the poor oaf!"

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The boy was very wretched over the possibility of his living. I followed this up: "If she gets that letter, and you get well, you'll be ridiculous for the rest of your life."

He turned on me savagely. "Well, what do you want me to do? Shoot myself, to make sure?"

In turn I rapped so sharply with my spoon upon my ice-cream plate that two waiters and a captain leaped to my side, distressed at my method of call. "I want you to send that girl a cable and tell her not to open that fool letter. She'll open it, of course, just the same; but follow it up with another letter and tell her the truth. However, don't take a boat out—you'll cross on the way."

He bounded to his feet. "We'll go now and send it. Thank you, oh, thank you! You don't want your ice, do you? It looks beastly."

"Yes, I do," I returned with spirit. "You go, and I'll eat both ices."

He wove in and out among the tables, stepped on a lady's train and made no apology. The waiter in a horrid silence in time supplemented my host's ice for my empty plate. A moon, full and smiling, looked in at the Guardsmen and the pretty ladies, and myself sitting there complacently alone—eating, eating.

I looked at the moon. "If it hadn't been for you, I would never have got into that old mess," I reproved.

The moon retorted, "Then if it hadn't been for me, you could never have got this boy out of his present difficulty."

In the words of Mrs. Wren: "Oh, dear; oh, deario!"

Chapter XVII

THE little four-wheeler passed out of my evenings Easter week, and I took to the Tube, partly from a desire to see more of life and partly in an effort to prove to Mrs. Hacking that I was of limited means. Our petty cash expenses had grown from a slight irritation into a grievance, although the ragged account-book was perfectly balanced and the entries therein mounting but necessities. Mrs. Hacking continued my adoring and respectful servant, even standing up for me before our betters, before footmen and such appendages of rank as occasionally came to our door.

A wonderful old dowager would now and then call upon my landlady, in a barouche, with the kind of a step that looks like a shovel. I can't imagine how the aristocrat of the two-bottle days ever got safely on and off these slippery devices, and "Watch your step" must have been born in the Georgian period. The dowager was welcome, as she brought plovers' eggs to the landlady, who, after her guest had gone, would bring them down to me. They were always hard-boiled and I assume that the plover is a very fiery bird.

The English have a charming way of sharing the beauties of life. They will work themselves up into a lather of rage over an extra bath with the geyser, then send you down a cup of fresh China tea in an old, old china cup, or lay a spray of spring flowers

on the table and slip quickly from the room. And these acts of courtesy are so deftly accomplished, whereas their financial operations, at least in private life, are so often bungled, that it must be they are not really meant for business. The Europeans are as greedy as any of us, and since they charge us with super-commercialism, I should think they might do well to emulate our methods, and display what I dare to call a grace in business dealings.

It is time for some American to write a book on "The Gentle Art of Making Money." I suppose, since he would be an American, he would not call it by that title. It would be called, "Don't Be a Piker," for the more one contrasts the business methods of our country with that of older nations the more one finds a beauty in the vast conceptions of the business mind, which has as distinct a value as a *bibelot*. We do not pike. We are supposed to be the people who make money with the greatest ease, who care only for making money, who know all about doing it; yet an American rarely haggles over a small sum, as will a man of almost any other nationality. A few moldy precepts must cling to the European business mind. "Look after the pence and the pound will take care of itself," and so forth. But Americans look very little at the pence, yet they thrive commercially. We are despised for our prodigality in European countries, even as the Europeans seek to take advantage of us. But the advantage, figuratively speaking, is only in pennies, and the American, out for a good time, grants them the small coin—and keeps his dollars.

Just so did my landlady show a mad activity over the inventory of the dishes in our kitchen. I had a

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terrible hour in the lower regions, acknowledging that certain plates were perfect, while she honestly wrote down in a blank-book that certain others were variously nicked, cracked deeply, cracked slightly, or scrotched (whatever "scrotched" is). Also how many wooden spoons there were, and what was the condition of the enamel of the stewpans. "But you must expect some wear-and-tear on these things! That's what I'm paying for," I bleated to her, longing to get back to my fire.

"Yet we must have an inventory, mustn't we?"

After all, I never did have one. She kept the only copy, so it would not have held in a court of law, for she could have changed the condition of the dishes, with not a "scrotch" on any of them—which would have cost me a great deal of money—three or four dollars! And the most interesting detail of my landlady's business activities has been her generous refusal ever to send me a bill for such plates that were really scrotched after entering the reckless service of Gladys and Mrs. Hacking. It is the kind of deed that goes with plovers' eggs, China tea, and daffodils.

The eggs take me back to the dowager's footman, who stood by the door, while Mrs. Hacking, out cooling her headache in the area, would call up to him reassuring messages about me. "I work for an actress," I heard her say, "but she is all right," and the footman looked relieved, since his mistress was within my four walls. Yet being "all right" piqued me. It sounded very dull, and that may have started the only approach to the kind of indiscretion which should rightly accompany spring through all its various coquettings. I shall endeavor to withhold the confession until the end of the chapter, with an effort

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to observe the climaxes, although, naturally, one of my age is eager to talk about any such deflections from the straight and narrow.

It came from London being so small. We are apt to put down to Fate any meeting at the crossroads, when Fate really has nothing to do with it. The roads cross, he living down one road because of the view, and she down another as the house had two bath-rooms. And they meet at the crossroads *because* the roads cross. I managed a train at about eleven-thirty because my work was over, and he took the same train as he had written his editorial and was going home. I may say that we always went home as separate entities. And that any one, no matter how ancient, withstood this business of coupling which goes on in the Tube proves that there is something in a Middle-West upbringing, after all. For again I found, as I became an underground traveler, that the one phase of life which you *cannot* escape in England is love-making. It is largely accomplished out-of-doors, because out-of-doors belongs to the people. A beautiful Englishwoman exclaimed to me not long ago—as we sat together on a house balcony, watching some sort of pageantry—over this frank exhibition of Cupid's wounds in a London crowd. "Why don't they go inside?" she laughed.

"Because they haven't any inside to go to," I answered, endeavoring to explain everything, as usual. "For generations girls weren't allowed followers to come to the houses, so they did their love-making in country lanes and city streets, on buses and penny steamers, and under the big trees of the parks. They are accustomed to it now. I feel sorry for them, having to share their love-affairs with the world."

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"I should think they would see that the nicest girls don't spoon in public," she continued to argue.

"But they aren't the nicest girls; they're from the stratum that for years have had no life offered them of being anything but what they are. They've been told they must keep within their station. Why shouldn't they have some of the fun of their station along with the dinginess of it? What intrigues me, as I pass through London streets, full of lovers, is the possible picture of what is going on in all the drawing-rooms on the other side of the window-boxes. A people as highly sexed—"

"Highly sexed!" Her eyes turned to the interior of the drawing-room, where nicely spoken, wholly correct men and women were taking tea. "Who says that?"

"Other nations say it," I responded, "and pathological journals. It is awfully puzzling, but it's so. Ask any woman who's been the round of the world who makes love most delightfully and she will tell you it's an Englishman. Why, you all recognize it, but you won't admit it. Even the park commissioners recognize it. Look at the chairs in the parks, all set out in twos. They come out every spring just as sure as lambs."

"I don't see where you find all this."

"Well, you find a lot of it in the London Tubes. After I have made my way through the crowd of love-makers at the Piccadilly Tube station, gone down in the lifts with those who haven't wrenched themselves apart, sat on the solitary bench of the platform with a couple or two as they wait for the trains, watched the smart ones being casual and those less fashionable not caring when once they get on the

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trains—by that time the whole Tube system seems to vibrate romance like the hills of Tuscany.”

She shrugged her shoulders pleasantly, as they shrug off topics here, which concludes the matter always. “I am glad some one gets something comprehensive out of the Tube system,” she said.

Then I laughed, too, and didn't tell her all the things I got out of the system, or she would say I was over here to strengthen the *Entente Cordiale*. For while she was an Englishwoman, and “highly sexed” startled her, she would give an attentive ear to dissertations on Love, whereas any expressions on my part of the thrills the London Tubes give me would bore her.

I like the enormity of the Tube's execution and its great usefulness. I like its perfect clarity in the posted directions, its platforms free from filth, the orderly queues waiting their turn at entering the trains—the absence of irritation, the good manners, as toes are stepped on. I like the escalator at Oxford Circus (and from what I have seen on these stairs it might quite well be called an osculator), with placards imploring you not to sit down on the steps. I like the posters on the walls. My name looks at me, but I do not recognize the lettering as anything of mine. But there are others not of the theater which change with the seasons.

For little homilies are preached to the people as to the best manners in Tubes, and, contrary to those at home, are left unsigned. “An obstructor is a selfish person,” we are told, and we have a picture of a homely man blocking up the way. Another gives a bird's-eye view of a train with selfish people refusing to move up into the center of the car. The “system”

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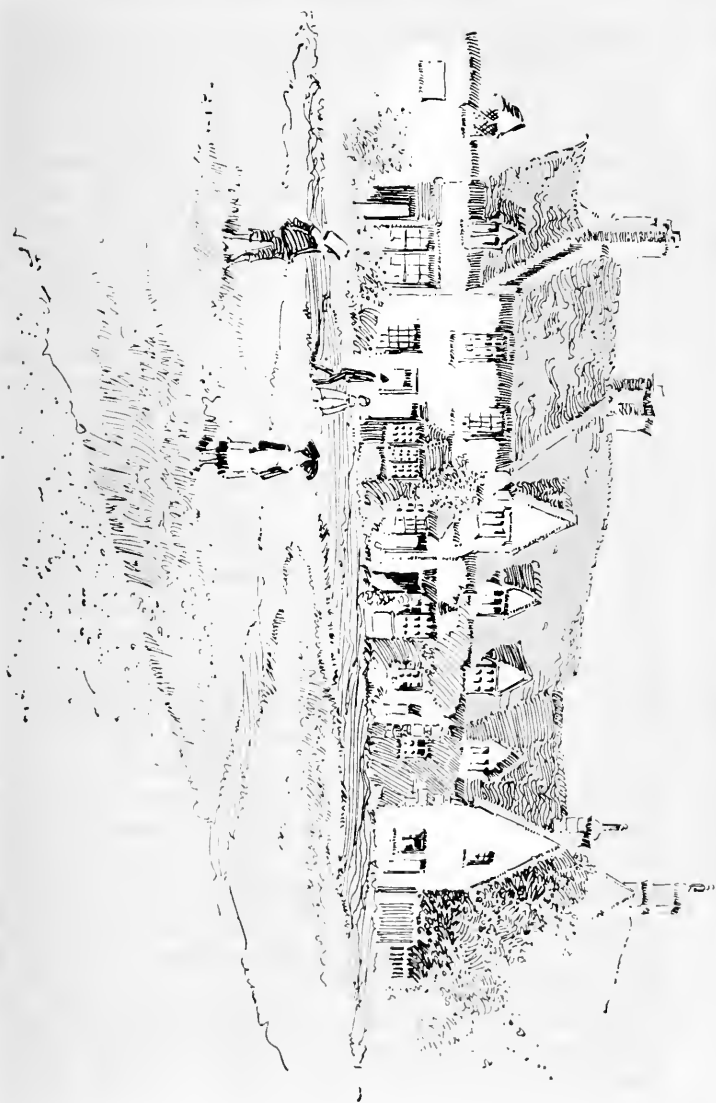
could carry twenty more to a car, or eighty more on every train of four cars, if every one would be unselfish. And following this revelation there is another bird's-eye view of happy people disposed evenly throughout the car on that halcyon day when we observe the 'golden rule. The modesty of the estimate as to the increased number that the car would accommodate amuses a New-Yorker. We would jam in two hundred where they take in twenty—yes, with everybody selfish.

When spring came, this effort to improve public manners gave place to the names of country stretches that could be reached by Tube, the posters headed by verse from Keats and Shelley and Wordsworth. It was very hard for a woman traveling soberly down to a matinée on a sunny day not to give her understudy the chance for which she had been praying, and go on to the end of the line to these sweet open spaces. Once I did break bounds, and 'stayed away from an entirely unnecessary rehearsal to visit Kew Gardens, and had there been any dire consequences I should have sued the Tube corporation for urging me to "go down to Kew in lilac-time."

This is, practically, an underground chapter (and the set of mole I rashly bought one day may or may not have been the result of my life beneath the earth), but it is fair to the Tube to touch a little on what it leads to, since the mere business of traveling on it is not as thrilling a procedure to every one as it is to me. A number of us keep moving on in life for the sake of the destination.

Spring was well advanced on the day I should have been at rehearsal and went to Kew Gardens instead. The bluebell dell had dried up like a little

COUNTRY PLACES THAT COULD BE REACHED BY TUBE



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shallow lake, and the rhododendrons and azaleas were in full bloom. God was in His heaven, well represented by singing birds; there was the smell of cut grass in the wide alleys. Since there are no vehicles allowed in the most lovely of all gardens, and you do not have to get out of the way of anything, there is a serenity about it which gives time for undivided attention to the beauty of the three hundred acres over which you may wander. For that matter, you can walk where you please in any of England's public parks, and you can lie down on the warm (or wet) grass and go to sleep without fear of a policeman poking you in the back and advising you to roll on, or roll over, or something. Yet the grass does not greatly suffer from the millions of Londoners who must take a park in lieu of country, nor do the flowers and bushes grow ragged from depredations of the visitors, although there are no antagonistic "Don'ts" staring at you from grass-plot and flower-bed. Throughout the whole of these gardens I saw no sign suggesting restrictions, and since we have to have them at home one assumes that the British have an instinctive regard for property and a sense of duty that is not yet ours.

My ideas of heaven are rather vague, but it came to me that these gardens are as near Elysian Fields as one could ask for. Indeed I can well imagine a Londoner suddenly translated from this world to the heavenly orbit set aside for the "unco' guid" murmuring disdainfully as he screws in his heavenly eye-glass, "Not so fine as Kew!" I was alone in the gardens, which is supposed to be a melancholy situation on a spring day, but I didn't really mind, and as a calm, by degrees, possessed me, a calm which I had

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made no effort to secure, I realized anew that the country does us good in spite of ourselves. The sick of heart and the unrestful may be bored, but they become tranquilized without the pain of striving for peace. There were a number of us women roaming through the glades by ourselves, yet not looking ridiculous, and I suppose real heaven will be a place where old maids will fit just as appropriately into the landscape as young lovers.

However, the gardens were not without lovers. "And we shall wander hand in hand" was being devoutly followed by admirers of Alfred Noyes (isn't it?), who bids us "go down to Kew in lilac-time," for the business of wandering hand in hand. The most obvious hand-in-handers were a pretty pair standing in front of the only lilac-bush I saw in all the gardens, both of them hopping up to smell the blossoms as their entwined arms were too engaged to pull the flowering branches down. I am inclined to think now that the poet advised the reader to "go down to Kew in lilac-time," not because there were any lilacs, but for the reason that the word scans easily. No one would take a Tube and line up for a bus at Hammersmith ("queue up for Kew") if he had been advised to "go down to Kew in rhododendron-time." It would be a clumsy time—or am I thinking of rhinoceroses?

I sat down on a bench near the lilac-bush, and another couple came along, also holding hands. As he was an officer still in uniform I would have thought this remarkable had I not met him before in the Tube. On that first encounter he had been standing on the platform at Dover Street, indignantly rating a Tube employee who represented for the time the System.

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The petty official made no defense of any sort, which was unusual in these days, and I started in their direction to become one of the group gathering fast about them. Yet I went but a few paces nearer, for I was arrested by the manner the officer had of not looking toward the Tube employee. His head was up, his shoulders squared, his voice vibrant. Yet he stared straight across the metals at an advertisement of no moment. And I realized the boy was blind.

It was the more of a shock for the sudden appreciation that this was the first time I had ever seen an angry blind man—a blind man who had dared to be angry. The sightless are so utterly at the mercy of the people about them that they must remain controlled, smiling passively in the hope of the good will of those with eyes to see. Some day this boy will become passive, too, with the patient face of the blind, but he is too recently translated from all the vigorous privileges of a perfect body to subordinate his speech to the exigencies of his cruel estate. The same girl was holding his hand who had held it on the platform, and she pulled down the lilac blossoms for him to smell. He was so gentle, but so helpless in his gentleness, that I wondered why he had railed in the Tube. I'll never know, for, realizing that he would have hated most of all that curious but pitying crowd which gathered about him, had he felt their presence, I did not become one of it.

I made an acquaintance in the garden whom I again met in the tube. I think it was Samuel Johnson who said that anybody could meet anybody at Charing Cross, but with all the prophetic vision of a great mind Johnson could never have defined a tunnel in his dictionary as a vaster meeting-place. The lady

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of my acquaintance had sat opposite me in the bus which took me from Hammersmith to the gardens. and, after the manner of English people nowadays, had discussed with other passengers what would be the best gate for me to enter, that I might fully enjoy the beauties of the place. They had decided upon the Lion gate for me, and as I sat upon the bench by the lilac-bush she approached me to make sure that I had missed none of the wonders.

I told her that the riot of color of azaleas and rhododendrons would pale the splendor of California blossomings, and she was so pleased at this—for Americans are often too grudging in their praises of products not their own—that I found her pattering after me on the Piccadilly platform a week or so later, to ask if I would not go with her to her own garden in Dedham that afternoon. I could have wept from sheer joy at her offer, for she didn't know an earthly thing about me, and I nodded toward my name on the posters, which proved that I had a pressing engagement with a *matinée*. I have never seen her since, and I will never see her garden, save the glimpse she gave me of a lovely one growing in her heart.

All of this goes to prove what a social center the Tube really is, and why it was not very shocking to look upon a middle-aged, editorially appearing gentleman whom I met every night as some one I could very well have talked to if he had been helplessly blind, or a woman fond of flowers, or even a ticket-taker. The ticket-takers nodded to me after a while along with the "'nk you," or even "'k' you," as they received my ticket. I talked with one of them about his family, for his wife and baby came down to guide him safely through the streets when he crawled out

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of his warren. Another line of the city was on strike, and I asked him if he would be called out. He said he 'oped not, that they hadn't a mortal thing to strike about, but strikes was like Bank holidays—they had to have them every now and then to keep the people satisfied. He wasn't called out, which I add for the satisfaction of such readers as myself who always want to know what happens after the point is over.

However, still in the leash of social restraint, I could not nod to the editor (I was sure he was an editor), although I was mad to ask him questions. I was mad to ask many questions in my travels in the Tube. I wanted to ask various partly intoxicated gentlemen how they managed it—ask it more in envoy than in anger. I remember one young man with the most musical voice I have ever heard, to whom I should love to have talked, yes, and guided him, although a policewoman (looking so capable in her blue uniform) would have warned the young man to have nothing to do with me.

There was a wait in the huge lift for some reason or other, after we had all crowded in, and the passengers were watching him with quiet amusement, for he kept dropping his ticket, which a patient public, as fascinated as myself by his pleasant manners, kept stooping to pick up for him. He was asking, not if *he* was "right" for his destination, but where the others around him were going; and as no one was inclined to tell him, he mused aloud: "Now you're all glowering at me," he said, in his gentle, smiling voice, "you're all glowering at me, just because I asked you where you're going. Strange, we English; every one here is going somewhere—a destination in life is the

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only thing we can never avoid. It is nothing to be ashamed of. Two people have asked me where I am going, yet when I ask them where they are going they glower at me. We are a secretive people, and it seems that the shame is not in the going, but in the telling. We are tight—" and then, after a pause, apologetically, "no, I am tight. And you glower at me because you are not tight, and therefore will not tell the truth."

Then we all laughed, but introspectively, because we did not know one another. And I wonder, now that the United States has "gone dry," if the naked truth will ever be spoken there again. One should read no brief for alcohol, but it often seems that, under its influence, there comes an absolute elimination of conventional utterances that are wrapped around a thought, and the idea expressed which appears to be the emanation from a fuddled brain is, in reality, the gist of the whole matter without the rags of restraining society to masquerade it.

Another man I should have enjoyed questioning was a very well-dressed citizen hanging demurely on to a strap—for seats are almost invariably yielded to women in the Tubes and buses—who, as an evident stranger to him passed out, made a kick at him as though to relieve his feelings. The stranger achieved the platform of his station without consciousness of the effort to kick him, and the strap-hanger became a controlled man of the world again. Now, what rebellion was going on in that passenger's mind that made him long to launch out and kick somebody? And how many of us who were sitting in the car, or standing in it, did not also long occasionally to make society our football? I once asked a girl who was treating my hair if she ever felt like hitting those

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ladies of fashion whose heads she brushed at so much a weary hour, with the implement in hand, and she replied, "How did you know I was longing to do that?" So, as I would have been the hittee in that instance, perhaps the iron clamps of conventionality are not to be despised.

On the day I went to the Tower by the Tube I traveled a portion of the way with the handsomest man in the world. Indeed, I descended when he did and trailed along respectfully behind him, which was quite in order, as it happened, for we were both going to the Tower, anyway. As he was in uniform he was probably one of the officers of a regiment quartered there. I longed to catch up with him and say, "You are the finest specimen of manhood I have ever seen," but I know I should have terrified him. Singular! He had had nothing to do with his good looks, and my admiration would have been purely an impersonal one. I simply like to look at them. I could have admired his dog, had one accompanied him, or his horse, upon which he was not, but might have been, mounted. He would not have sent for the police had I expressed my appreciation of the good looks of his beasts. Yet both of these animals would have reflected his good taste, and therefore the compliment would have had more to do with him than his splendid bearing and noble head. But now he must go through life never knowing that a gray-haired woman thinks him the superman, all on account of social restrictions.

I have seen a great many men over here that can be classed among the finest types of earth's manhood. While I would not exchange the chunkiest of our men for the slimmest of these creatures, because they *are* our men, yet the more I see of the British officers

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the better they stand in my critical eye. Race is in their length of limb, their bearing, their sureness, and, strangely enough, coupled with that, their modesty. Some day—a thousand years from now—when we in the States have settled down to a type, we may have an equal distinction—but not yet.

Our men over here have an individuality about them which speaks for extreme resourcefulness when a personal decision would be necessary, and a depth of chest and strength of limb which give them almost unlimited endurance; but they, as compared to the British, show an inclination to over-weight and to a heaviness of feature.

Then our uniform is trying, and our little overseas caps absurdly unbecoming. We eschew the ornamentation of the Sam Browne belt in America as something too elaborate for democracy; the pockets must be inside, and high collars choke our officers about the neck for some Declaration-of-Independence reason or other. But I think if our army is to remain a lure as a means of living, the sergeants outside the recruiting-stations might well wear better-looking and more comfortably cut garments as an added attraction to the business of soldiering.

While the private soldier in England is much shorter than his officers, as a rule, the colonials—officers and men—are of good height. When I make my way up the dim Haymarket at nights it is not difficult to pick out the Anzaes coming toward me. I recall one of them suddenly looming up on one of the soft spring evenings when it would seem that all violence of elements and of mankind was forever over. The great theater across the way was just emptying its house, and men with a white patch that stood for their

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evening clothes, and women in pale evening frocks, were strolling along the sidewalks. Guests were descending from brilliant motors at the Carlton Hotel, other well-dressed Londoners were pressing hopefully toward the Trocadero, which is the only great restaurant open for supper. The scene was exactly as it used to be before a man whose name every one has forgotten threw a bomb at an archduke whose name never did matter. Suddenly, this giant Anzac roaming down the middle of the Haymarket gave a great shout, which arrested the attention of all those happy, light-hearted people. He lifted his long arms above his head—a commanding figure in the darkness. His voice absolutely filled the street:

“Number One gun ready! Move two degrees to the left! Fire!” rang out on the air.

We were all quiet for the moment, and the Anzac went on cascading down the street. “We’ll never get away from it—never,” I heard a woman say as I passed her. And, of course, we never will—and mustn’t.

The handsome Guardsman got away from me at the Tower, for he could pass through with everybody saluting him, but poor I must remain behind because I had a pocketbook. I must give my pocketbook to a man who had a perfect menagerie of them in a row of little cages. And when I protested at this, because my hanky was in my pocketbook, and my identity card, to say nothing of my money, I was told that it had been made a rule during the war and no one had had time to revoke it. For once a lady had carried a bomb in her hand-bag, and while she had done no damage, she might have; hence this deadly hostility against all purses, great and small.

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"If you will look in my purse you will see I have no bomb," I urged. But that wouldn't do. It was the rule, and I went into the Tower grounds feeling more like a criminal than ever before, and thinking of a number of places where I could have secreted splendid bombs on my person had I really wanted to blow up the Tower.

I did not want to blow it up, although to my thinking it is just as ugly now as it was when I visited it years ago. But it has now taken on an added flavor, for within the last four years the German spies were there confined and shot on some part of the parade ground, a spot not yet historically remote to show to the spectator. I asked one of the beef-eaters, all dressed up in his red puffed-out Yeoman-of-the-Guard uniform, if any of his men fought; and he said that he himself had just come back from France. Then I walked around him in a circle to get up my nerve, for the sixpences which encourage speech were back in the little cage, and I returned to ask him pleasantly, as one friend to another, if he had fought in that fancy dress. But he hadn't—he wore khaki.

You see I am beating about the bush, the bush meaning the editor whom I met almost nightly, for it is very absurd to be confessing an interest in editors—especially as you know them so well—when one is going on fifty, even though the editor is going on fifty, too. I tried to ease my conscience over my interest in this able, portly man, and pretended that I was looking out for Beechey, although Beechey and the baronet were getting along very well. He had spent money on flowers, and when an Englishman spends money on a lady he is going some.

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As I walked home from the Tube station at night I found myself taking an added interest in homes, and where I would like to live if I had my choice of London habitations. And this mental May-moving is as comfortable an indulgence in springtime activities as one could ask for. There was one little street that I passed through at midnight which I never saw in the daytime, and which I will try hard not to see. It was a crooked little road, with domains for every kind of household. Some stood back from the roadway, with gardens in front; good-sized houses where one could entertain largely; and there were other delightful low buildings, with small doors but a step up from the pavement. I frequently took one of these little houses, in my imagination, put in a double window, painted the door the green of the Prophet, and lived there very comfortably on five pounds a week. A fairly spacious house had two doors, and in that one I had Mrs. Wren (with family) to look after me, the Wrens using the smaller door, all being very independent and happy—although this house cost me more.

I think I was generally alone in my house, and if I took one of them with a garden and became a husband and wife, the fancy resolved itself into Beechey's house, married to the baronet. Try as I might, I could not be a husband and wife, although on very springy nights I arranged for the editor to call every day, no matter what house I lived in, to talk over his work. That is, the editor called until one actual night, on the Piccadilly platform, I discovered an acquaintance of mine talking to the portly, intelligent gentleman, and, spying me, for I was running away rapidly, he dragged me over to the man of my dreams and introduced me.

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The friend left us as the train drew in and we crowded into the car, each seeking a strap, and began going through motions with our mouths which would suggest conversation. I didn't hear a thing he said, and I doubt if he gathered anything from my efforts; and it suddenly occurred to me that this was the first time I had been obliged to make conversation above the roaring wheels. I began to wish heartily I had never met this gentleman, but had gone on with our mental conversations in which I always appeared to such advantage. In my embarrassment I did not grasp a strap, but found myself holding on to an electric-light bulb, exhilarated, but perplexed by the sudden warmth of my nervous hand.

I did not long hold on to the bulb, however, as a terrible young woman—terrible in her youth—who was seated directly beneath me, looked up as I laughed shrilly over my mistake, and immediately rose to give me her seat. She was not very young, either, but she was younger than I, and by the time I had concealed my rage and sunk into her place I was a decrepit old woman nodding in the chimney-corner.

I grew a little older to my new friend, too. He tried to hide it, but as he bent above my aged frame there was a sort of triumph in his face, a masculine triumph. I could imagine just what was going through his mind. He, a man, would never be old or ridiculous; he could do anything he wanted to, and no one would call him silly. He could walk right out with the chit who had given me her seat, if he had known her, and no one would have thought them an ill-matched couple. But let me walk out with a young man the age of that young woman and I would be a joke—just a joke.

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I assume that was going through his mind, but not after we reached Brompton Road station. There an awful judgment was pronounced upon him. There was another girl in the train, sitting by my side, utterly absorbed in a book, so much so that she had not observed my relegation to the ingle-nook in life, nor the arrogance of my male companion, who was from then on a lusty fellow in his own eyes, much too young for me. But a lurch of the train and the consequent reeling about of those standing caused her to look up, and with a cry of dismay she leaped to her feet and, profusely apologizing, offered—offered my triumphant male her seat! He refused it with imploring eyes, refused it indignantly, piteously; but she was adamant. She no doubt had a father herself, or a grandfather. And at last, with a groan of desperation, hoping to attract no more attention from the amused crowd, he crouched down beside me—an old, old man, ready for the chimney-corner, too.

I walked through my little street very happily that night, for the point is that the dénouement was a great relief to me, and, while nobody will believe it, I was glad that the verdict of youth had so saucily put us in our proper niches. One might think that this was choosing the dream to the business, and that the friend I loved back in America who scolded me in the first chapters for wanting to dream would have disapproved, had I not found a letter on my return home from the boy who on Good Friday was preparing for death. For this letter proved the Importance of Getting Old with all its ensuing relegation of actualities to the material young. The boy wrote that he had a complete new set of doctors, and therefore, I should judge, a completely different body. He was

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now going to get well and marry his young lady who had flown to him from Egypt.

He seemed to think it was all my arranging. He understood now the wisdom of suffering, he glibly wrote. For it would seem that the grief of one can always be resolved into joy for another, and as he was undoubtedly the "another" and I the "one," he didn't in the least regret my experience. Nor did I. Particularly as that early happening prepared me absolutely to prefer my small mental house in my dim little street. I shall not suffer in my house of dreams.

But it is not always so—had not always been so with me, perhaps. Love is a greedy animal, and the exercising of it develops a greater and a greater appetite. Tranquil as the homes looked in my little street at midnight, a harassment of the spirit was not unknown behind the correct stucco fronts.

Always, always it intrigues me, as I walk through a city, to know what is going on behind the unblinking house-fronts. And before the year was out I met a woman who lived in one of these houses. I will not give you her nationality, and that she talked to me so freely may have been from the unflattering fashion women have of confiding to their sisters who are not dangerous. But I no longer mind that. I can always avenge myself by stealing the plot and making money out of them!

She had been loved—oh, yes!—more than once. She made little calculations on her fingers which ended in a shrug of amusement, as though there were not digits enough on her pretty hands to tell them all off. And she had been hurt just about as many times. Not long ago (while I was walking past her

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house perhaps) another one had come along—very agreeable, quite in earnest, serious enough for flowers.

“He had sent them by messenger, and came on later,” the woman recounted (she liked the recounting; I could see that; it is one of the compensations of an experience no matter how it turns out). “They lay on my little satinwood table, and I stood by the table, touching them with my finger-tips as he came into the room. He crossed directly to me—strode across, and then stood towering above—oh, a big man. Now I knew perfectly well if I did not move back a pace and if I lifted my face to his, he would kiss me, and after he’d kissed me he would soon mean a great deal to me.

“And I knew, too, because I am worldly-wise, my dear, that it wouldn’t be so very different, no matter who he was. And, will you believe it? The whole panorama of those early experiences passed in front of me as I stood fussing with those poor flowers. Not only my life, but millions of lives just the same—women’s lives. Those first wonderful days—the discovery of tremendous mutual interests: skies, chimney-pots, music, the vista of streets, our friends, our desire to help them, our desire to help every one—we were out for molding lives. And then those breathless silences—of love. We would be going through all those phases when his first note would come, breaking an appointment; and after that we would quarrel a little—(but oh, the reconciliation!)—then in a little while would come what I call the telephonic period. You know—waiting for the bell, or hearing your heart beat as you decide to crush your pride and call him up. By that time you are beaten; you might as well accept it. And then scenes, and tears in the night;

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and oh, most shameful of all! walking hurriedly past his door. So it wears on and out, until that day comes when you swing out of bed in the morning, thinking first 'tea' and not his name."

She paused.

"Did you review all that as the young man stood waiting to see if you would raise your head?" I asked it softly, fearing to break her confessional mood.

"Every bit of it. I knew he would be like the others—if I lifted my head."

"Well? What did you do?"

And then that close-mouthed, exasperating woman laughed and said, "That's telling!"

But I know what she did. Do you?

Chapter XVIII

IT was on a glad May morning that I parted with Mrs. Hackett and my *maisonnette* and went down to Mayfair, to live at a Woman's Club. The plane-trees came out at last to wish me farewell, and the garden was at its best, especially as Mrs. Hacking had now taken from the line all those coarse garments of repentance which my landlady had been so troubled over her insistently hanging out.

Mrs. Hacking took leave of me shortly before Beechey and I took temporary leave of each other. My working housekeeper had almost worked out the four pounds she owed me, and I really couldn't afford to keep her on any longer, as the cost of having her remain with me while she paid me back was becoming too great. She went away at noon, dressed in fresh crape, to take up her new position as barmaid. She said her "dad" advised her to go into the bar, so that she might enjoy more cheerful surroundings. She left a roll of receipted bills, and that I found later they were earlier bills, and that the last week's ones had not been paid at all, is of no great moment; it was my own fault and my last tribute to spring madness.

For I had no sooner settled at the club than the business American in me began to assert itself. To the amazement of my English friends, who in the first place would not have been bilked by Mrs. Hacking, but, granting that they could have been, would have

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called it "tiresome" and dropped the matter, I sought out a solicitor, and he went after Mrs. Hacking. And, mark you, what I had failed to do by generosity and the exercise of the consideration I feel is due to those we employ this man effected immediately by the drafting of a letter.

The British lower classes fear the law, not only because it is the law, with its heavy penalties, but for the reason that it stands for control, and ordered sway, and set regulations which keep them happily—or unhappily—disciplined. I have never seen her since, but she has paid into the attorney's office such sums as we could prove that she had taken. It was a pitiful ending of an effort to introduce comfortable innovations into a circumscribed life. It was more pitiful for Mrs. Hacking than for me. I knew myself all along—and I knew Mrs. Hacking. But I can imagine the confusion that is going on in her mind, as she draws beer at the taps, and sends a weekly postal order to my firmly importuning (well-named) "solicitor." She met an employer who was at once amiable and terrible; one with loose, lavish inclinations, who suddenly showed the cloven hoof of commercialism. In short, an American.

When the door closed on our handmaiden (hand-me-out maiden, we had grown to call her), Beechey and I faced each other. We both had our traveling-cases in hand, as she was going into the country for some time. She was going away, and I knew it, to escape from the baronet; to escape a title and a shelter without the fear of Quarter Day hanging over her, warm clothes, and plenty of food for the rest of her life.

"Why?" I asked her in the silence that followed the banging of the door.

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"He hasn't asked me yet, but he may, and so I must get away before he does." That was like Beechey. She cared nothing at all about scalps—they were not paintable.

"Why?" Feeling no necessity for a further choice of words.

"Because it would be impossible."

"Why?"

"Oh, my goodness, don't go on saying that! I'm not his kind, that's all."

"He'll never want you to be. That's just the point."

"Well, he's not my kind."

"He's a gentleman, and you're a gentlewoman. He likes beautiful things, and so do you—"

"He doesn't like beautiful things."

"Not open country, and trees, and flowers?"

"Oh, he likes them all right, when they're real, but not when they're painted."

"I thought he bought pictures?"

She gave a little shriek. "He does! He does! But oh, such pictures! Cats lapping milk out of saucers. Old folks asleep, and small boys tickling them. I saw them last week. I didn't want to speak to you of them. I thought at first I could live them down. I couldn't—ever."

"I've no patience with you, judging a good man by painted cats lapping milk!"

"You *have* patience. You understand *perfectly*. You hate bad acting, and you hate bad actors. It isn't their fault they're bad, but you hate them just the same."

"The baronet isn't a painter. And what if he was, and a bad one? You're not. It wouldn't change your ideals."

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"Yes, it would. It would change me. You said yourself, once, that when fine actors played for a long time in remote stock companies they began to grow careless, and after a while they didn't know a good performance from a bad one. It came from association. I tell you, when you get into an old family like that, in order to get along with them you must try to feel like them. It wouldn't be fair not to. And I'm never going to feel that cats lapping milk make a good picture—no, not if I don't have enough to eat!"

"You're not young, Beechey—not awfully young. You're twenty-eight now, and while you may not absolutely starve, you won't have enough—"

"I'll never starve. I'll eat my crusts of bread and I'll see great pictures. I'll go to the Imperial War Museum and see Sargent's 'Gassed' when it's hung there, and I'll come away satisfied."

I was silent. Beechey and I had been to the Academy, and we had seen together Sargent's "Gassed," which had been painted for the Imperial Museum. We looked at it for a long while, and didn't say anything, then we walked around a little, and went back to see it again; and when we went home both of us cried in the bus.

"After I had seen the pictures in his house," my friend continued, "I asked him to go with me to the Academy. It was the acid test. He loitered through the rooms, picking out all the 'slick pictures with stories to them, and stopping to admire. By the time he came to 'Gassed' my heart was beating so loud he could have heard it. He did hear it, I guess, for he looked once—*once* at 'Gassed'—and then he turned to that awful thing on the opposite wall, full of

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machinery making shells, and he said, 'You can almost hear the roar, can't you?'

"It was my heart roaring—my machinery inside of me. And it came to me right there that, of all the machinery inside of me, the part which gets the least consideration in the struggle to keep ourselves stoked and going is the heart—the spirit, I mean. And yet it doesn't cost one cent to feed it—it just asks for space to breathe in and not be crowded 'way over on the left side to make room for French oysters and pheasants' breasts and *Pêche Melba*. Oh, I'm saying it all crazily, but you must know what I mean—you couldn't act if you didn't. If I married that nice man—if he asked me to, and he hasn't—I'd just be putting my spirit in one of those little wicker cages cruel people keep their birds in."

That's that, as they say over here. And being as old as the world, and thinking I'm as wise, I could very well have said to Beechey: "All right—you're right. Give up the baronet. But who *is* the man?" Only I didn't. I kissed her, and she went down to live in a lovely old manor-house, with the kindest of English friends, while I went on to my club with the comfortable feeling that so long as those friends of hers are alive all her machinery will be fairly well nourished. But I decided that there ought to be, among our many relief societies, one established for the cultivation and support of just such rare, crazy spirits as Beechey's.

Yet I like efficiency, and I like best to find all the machinery working together—brains, heart, and the hair-spring nerves. And I was as happy as possible the minute the club door was opened to me to witness among the women gathered there all these little

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innards co-operating. This club is composed of American women—they may have married Englishmen, but they must be American-born—and during the war it became the center for American activities having to do with relief work. The president of the club is the head of the Women's Division of the American Red Cross in London. She still sits surrounded by clicking typewriters, while in the drawing-rooms above days are still set apart for the making of hospital garments; for the war rolled slowly into a whirling ball of furious energy, and just as slowly will it wear down into the flat stretches of civilian life.

Out of its uglinesses have sprung some goodnesses that have come to stay. There is a special committee for civilian relief in this club that takes over the cases our consul sends to them, for they must be Americans in distress. It is a shameful thing that, unlike any other country of position, our consulates are the only official residences in strange countries that have not a government sum at their convenience to cover such cases. The funds applied to these men and women in need are collected through the generosity of the American visitors and from those expatriates who know better this side of the world.

The ground-floor front is used by the American Red Cross and this committee for civilian relief, and the hall of the club is never empty of some of our country-people in distress, whispering their story into the ears of the clear-visioned girls in Red Cross uniform or the charming, well-dressed woman who cares for our civilians. I wish for the sake of the unfortunates who come for help that they had a greater privacy for their griefs, but I never pass through the hall, and I am sure others are like me,

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without feeling that, by my very proximity to their distresses, these griefs are common, and that I, too, without the insignia of officialdom, must put a shoulder to the wheel as part of each day's curriculum.

It was everybody's shoulder to the wheel on the Sunday I came in with my suitcase. "Have you any money?" I was greeted with. And as I counted out my salary and placed it confidently into the hands of the Red Cross official, the housekeeper came rushing in with another roll borrowed from a son-in-law, her arrival coincident with a second Red Cross girl who was already hatted and coated for a hurried trip to Liverpool. A telegram had come from a company of soldiers' wives who were being sent back to our country that the American Red Cross check for their passage was refused in that distrustful city of Liverpool, and the boat would sail that night without them. The Red Cross girls had gone down into the country for a breath of fresh air, but they had come up again, and, as no large sum of money was in the office, the hat was sternly passed around and the Sunday outing was transferred into a long train-journey for one of the little Americanos. But the soldiers' wives sailed that night.

While I had emptied my safety-pocket, I had a few shillings left to take me out to Pinner-on-the-Pin that afternoon, provided that I would go third-class and not buy any chocolates, which are four shillings a pound, and awful. This was to be my first Sunday in the country, not counting a muscular engagement to and from Hampton Court and Richmond. We had friends to visit in both those delightful places, friends whom we held in fond esteem as we started toward a bus station, but who became disagreeable

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and ill-favored in appearance as we waited and crowded and fought for a chance to see them. Upon arriving at Hampton Court and Richmond, they took on more attractive qualities. We agreed that it was "lovely when you got there," and were ready to listen to the ease with which we could travel back and forth on week-days. Yet, ere we had reached London, upon our return trip home (buses abandoned, taxis sought for, Tubes and trains resorted to), our suburban hosts again became abominable in our eyes, and, like the rest of London, we chimed, "Never agyne!"

Unlike the rest of London, I had clung to this, but the city people, after four years of misery, cannot let a Sunday pass without one more try for these choice spots which were once gained without effort. They are thirsty for the sun and sky, and for clear nights that are not fraught with fear. But I clung to city gardens for Sunday tea during the early spring, or went to an old house in the Grove at Highgate, which, as I pleasantly ruminate upon pleasant homes, remains most affectionately in my memory.

It is the most extraordinary feature of London life: this taking a Tube, traveling for twelve minutes, emptying yourself out from the Tube lift into a mean, overcrowded slum, and, by making one turn, walk under the limes of a country village to the Georgian doorstep of your country house. My friends do not stop at the Georgian period. The warm brick wall and bastion which separates their garden from Hampstead Heath is of the time of Edward III. He built it for utilitarian purposes, and it has become a lovely thing of color for the eyes of the *literati* to feed upon. I, for one, have always found less beauty in an ancient

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bit of building originally erected for the mere purpose of being beautiful than in such garden-walls which once served a serious purpose. And I think faces are that way, and that they do not take on any great loveliness unless there has been a nobility of effort behind the outward beauty of feature, time thus cunningly revealing the inner spirit to the outer world. Men of letters for generations recognized Highgate Hill as a dear spot for the purpose of writing, with none too long a journey down to Fleet Street, equally dear for the purpose of selling. Lord Bacon died here as the result of inhospitably damp sheets. Coleridge, who lived in my grove (for any place I love becomes mine without costing me a cent), also looked last upon the Heath from a Grove window before he turned his face to the wall. Indeed, a great deal of dying has gone on in Highgate, and the visitor is obliged to repel a strong inclination of Grove hosts to rush you to the burial-ground, something as we once drove strangers about the cemetery in my Western city. Only we had another reason than graves—they were the only grounds whose roads were good.

A sort of despair sweeps over me as I record from time to time in this book encounters with present-day writers, and yet say so little of those men and women who have formed our tastes and founded what style we may possess. But reading blue tablets set in city houses is not the pursuit of a real householder, and this is a mean chronicle of the moment. Across the street from my club is one of these tablets and I have never read whom it holds in honorable recognition. It might be Sheridan or Shelley, Sydney Smith or Lord Lytton, all of whom lived in my street, which goes to prove that I am more fashionably

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located than if I were in Highgate, where Lord Bacon strayed purely by accident, while experimenting on a hen.

Now, a fashionable neighborhood has a drawback which I never appreciated in reading avidly of the routs and balls, *soirées* and masques in the novels of the English from Richardson to the interpreters of to-day's smart society. Comment on this is stepping aside from Pinner, but I shall return to the little village gladly—all in good time—for my visits to Pinner relieved my tired brain from the insistent beat of syncopated time which pounded in my head throughout the week, as the result of nightly jazzes in my street of fashion. In all my reading of those London parties, in my enjoyment of crushes on the sidewalk, of hostesses on the staircase, of "Let me get you an ice, dearest," of chaperons against the wall, of "The royalties are coming," of the last dance in the pale dawn—she as white as the dawn in his arms—I never once thought of the neighbors who were not invited and wanted to go to sleep!

Yet one need not be sorry for the neighbors, now that we have entered upon the whirlwind fashions of the time, provided that they dance also. In the present day, if the business of drum-beating, howling aloud, blowing a siren, and breaking glass bottles becomes insistent, the neighbor can get up and go to the party, whether invited or not. It would not be very shocking to the hostess of to-day if you came over to her house, yes, and brought a partner with you. Even in very fashionable houses hostesses know only half of their guests at these balls for young people. They invite some girls and some boys, and these acquaintances bring their own partners with whom

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they are accustomed to dance. They do not even bother with the securing of a card. "Oh, dear!" a London hostess is said to have exclaimed, "I feel so lonesome at my own dances."

And since the war many of the buds refuse to be chaperoned. "Besides, I'd never be able to find one," a girl told me. "She'd be dancing, too." It's a problem—another one—and I don't in the least care how it's going to end, so long as I can get back, before another London season, to my New York apartment amid riotous studios, whose Bohemian occupants go to bed at ten that they may have the early morning light for work.

But on Sundays there has been Pinner, commencing when the days grew absolutely warm. Beechey dared country houses before I ventured, and would creep back to my fireside to thaw out. The English have a week for spring house-cleaning. It comes along in April some time, when the fires are allowed to go out, and are not started again. It is spring because the house is clean, and if it is spring it is too warm for fires. So tra-la-la, put on another sweater.

I changed from the Piccadilly Tube to the Bakerloo *en route* to that place where you buy your tickets for Pinner. It is presumably a station that has doors and windows above-ground, but of this I know nothing, as my operations have been carried on *sub terra*. I met, while going through the galleries at the changing-point, a large part of the Japanese army, who couldn't read signs and with Eastern stoicism were trying to accommodate themselves to a lifetime in the underworld—a world which, I hear, is not without its attractions. It must have been the enthusiasm in my face which caused them to attach themselves to me

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when they heard me inquiring my own way Pinnerward, as from that time on I headed the army. Even at the ticket-office they also bought tickets for Pinner, not that they knew any one there, but probably for the reason that Pinner is easy to pronounce. I do not wish to boast, but I feel that I created a demand for tickets for Pinner, every one was booking for there, and officials were crying, "Not the Pinner train," to lax individuals with an inclination to go wrong if possible.

When the train pulled in—it was made up at Baker Street—I immediately secured a good seat by the door, and began telling lateish passengers, "Yes, this is the Pinner train," until I had my compartment full in no time. They were standing up, even, blocking the view from the windows. Then a silence fell, the way it does on railway trains, after the doors are banged and before we start; and upon looking at my watch I found that, according to its proud, pre-war platinum face, it was past the hour for the departure. And I then said in a very timid voice to all of those glum silent ones, "Is this the Pinner train?"

No one answered me, they were so astounded. I had been collecting visitors fond of Pinner for fifteen minutes. I had created a *flair* for Pinner. People who had hitherto been satisfied with Harrow had changed their tickets at the cost of threepence extra, all on account of that secure sensation which goes with a party when being personally conducted. And now I asked if this was the Pinner train!

At that precise moment we started toward some destination—no one knew what—and, frantic with anxiety, heads were stuck out of our compartment windows, two full heads and one extra pair of eyes at

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each window, while hoots filled the air to attract the attention of the guard and ask if we were "right" for Pinner. We were—I knew it all along—yet the compartment was hostile toward me, and I rode all the way down behind a large, engulfing newspaper, wrongly called the *Observer*. Or, perhaps, I should say "rightly," as it had every opportunity for observing while I dared not peep out once at the sweet green fields for fear of accusing eyes directed toward me. For that reason I did not know that the carriage had emptied itself at one stopping-place until I heard a chattering of strange tongues on the platform, and found that the Japanese army, along with everybody else, had reached Pinner.

But my troubles were not over. While I had the name of the cottage, and the name of the lane where the cottage lived, I could not find the cottage. I do not like houses to have numbers when they live in lanes, but after going up and down the pretty way a number of times, calling on all sorts of respectable people, who were creaking with Sunday joints, I could well understand why a postman should prefer numbers. I wonder that they do not strike for numbers, and refuse to have a Harbor View, or a Milldew, or whatever it may be, on their visiting-list.

I then withdrew to the top of the lane, where I could see a caravan over in a field, and I wished my friends lived in something as definite as a gay red wagon. I reflected upon my friends. Now, they were Irish, and if they were Irish, would they not do as the Irish do? Yes, they would. And what would the Irish do? They would let vines grow untidily over the name if it was on the house, and if on the gate I would not see it, as, of course, the gate would not be

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closed. I tried first looking for open gates sagging from the hinges, for I did not wish to be discovered tearing crimson ramblers from pleasant homes, as ruthless as a house-painter, except as a last resort. It *was* on the gate—the only open gate—and as the door-bell was out of order, or at least no one answered it, I walked through the house, and discovered my friends in the garden which gave directly upon the meadow where lay the caravan, the Pin, a small stream, rolling between.

My hostess had called upon the caravan people while strolling in the meadow on the pretense of looking for tennis-balls. She had no tennis-court, but an inventive mind, and she had found the tenants of the gay vehicle very ungipsy-like, the lady being most apologetic because she had no maid. How she ever could have secured a servant, sodden with feudalism, to work for anybody who lived in a wagon I don't know, but I suppose she would have shown her a servant's bedroom under the wagon, and that conformity to custom would have overcome any other unusualness in correct living.

Nothing was usual about my friend's house. She said she had no housekeeping cares, as she didn't care, and I wondered why I hadn't thought of that in Chelsea, since I *really* didn't care either; but my Dutch and English ancestry get in the way of a complete shrugging off of responsibility. I have a guilty feeling that I ought to care, which nullifies actual abandonment to form.

They cared about a great many other things—those people. They cared not only for Ireland, but for the world and its future happiness. They seemed to feel that the great white hope was the United

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States, and they assured me that many other people in England felt that way, too, but wouldn't say so. With one exception, this has been the only household I have visited during my entire stay over here where my country has been upheld, and I never left them without a strong desire to stop at the cable office and send a message to somebody—anybody in Washington—which would run something like: "Just returned from Pinner. It is decided there League of Nations imperative. Please accept."

I say British households, for the American in business here is stanch to his birthplace, although I have found that the men of arts and letters are less loyal, and I think it is not for the reason that the latter class have more cultivated minds, but that they are not so generally well informed. We are all suffering from a surface knowledge of world conditions, and we have caught a few phrases which we chatter out at luncheon-tables and think we're clever. Especially is it so among women who sat next to somebody important the night before, and can tell you all of Downing Street's inner processes of thought.

But, as I have said earlier, I don't blame an Englishwoman for attacking us if she wants to and displaying at the same time an enormous lack of real statistics. It is the American expatriate, sneering out of one corner of her mouth at the commercialism of her country and out of the other corner inquiring how she may avoid the British income tax, who is about as mean a type as our nation has yet produced.

If the few Americans who are not entirely loyal think they are making a success with the English by deprecating the ways of their own country they are pitifully mistaken. As highly nationalized a people

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as the English look with indifferent contempt upon such boot-licking. "Surely a man without a country," one of them said to me, after listening to an arraignment of the greed of the United States by a one-time citizen, who asked, in the next sentence, what was the highest price I thought he could get out of these States if he went on a "propaganda" lecture-tour.

I met at a restaurant dinner, several weeks ago, an American who, having been in this country for a few weeks, couldn't go to sleep without a monocle in his eye. His particular theme was the ineptness of our fighting forces, and he created by this assertion such fiercely fighting forces at the hotel table that he withdrew and went to his rooms. An hour afterward we called up this man on the telephone, with Beechey at the mouthpiece and the rest of us hovering near. Beechey became a lady of title, with a super-English accent, who had dined, so she said, at the next table, and had made so bold as to call up the gentleman—all London knowing him, of course—and applaud him for his breadth of mind.

What we could gather from the vibrations that came to us was a most ecstatic expatriate assuring her ladyship that he was not at all in sympathy with the narrow views of his countrymen, and, indeed, often felt like apologizing for them. By clutching each other's hands we forbore to tear the telephone from the wall and hurl it in the direction of his rooms, and after Beechey had made an appointment to lunch with him the next day, we left him to the punishment which lay ahead, of walking around the hotel lobby during the following noon hour, waiting to be claimed by a real lady. We never knew the end, but, at least, it was something to have met with the complete renegade.

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The other British household not only upheld my country, but rebuked me for not fighting for it more vigorously. They little knew that I could have put my head down on the shoulder of this household and cried tears of appreciation. It was a comfortable place to cry in, which means also to be glad in: the top floor of an office-building, wide and low-ceilinged, like a country house, with the windows on one side giving upon a green graveyard, gay with sporting children, and on the other upon a dusky city street where we could faintly espy hopeful night-walkers mincing down on high heels to the Strand.

The night before I dined in this house, an elderly woman—one abandoned to being elderly—had asked, as we left the Tube lift, if she could walk along with me, for she was afraid of the dark. It ended in my taking her all the way home to a nice little house opposite the palace of a duke, while she told me of the fear of the black outdoors that had always possessed her. We spoke of these things as we looked down upon the dusky street from this high, safe home, and my hostess said she had often thought how dreadful it must be for a girl who was really afraid of the streets after dark to have to walk them for her living. For timidity of the night is just as much a part of the lives of the unconformed as of those of elderly ladies living in the shadow of ducal houses.

From that topic all of us—those back in the room, sitting on chintz-covered chairs—went on to speak of the wickedness of the dark room as a punishment for criminals, now that fear of thick darkness, claustrophobia it is called, is a defined nervous disease. That subject led on to various injustices of imprisonment, and from that to German prisoners in England.

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I had a sick heart beating against my breast, for I wanted to speak of a judgment rendered in an English court a day or two before. A British farmer was fined ten pounds for giving a German prisoner a piece of bread that he might supplement the scanty fare allowed him in the prison camp, and by increasing his fare increase his working output on the farmer's land, for the prisoner was weak.

I hesitated, fearing to give offense, yet the English party themselves brought it up, not discussing it loudly, but in low tones of distress. And it was all kinds of English people who were concerned over this judgment; one was a woman whose husband had been killed at the front; another an officer in a Highland regiment, scarred for life by the bullets of the enemy; my own hostess was bearing a title as a reward for her magnificent work throughout the war. And it was an English gentleman of the old school who gave the summary: "The little farmer—did you read his plea for clemency? He begged the court to bear in mind that he was not sorry for the German—he gave him bread that he might work him harder. I'd rather be Judas than that judge. Judas betrayed only one man—this fellow has betrayed his country."

In spite of the verdict of the judge, I walked home through the streets that night with ever so warm a feeling in my heart for all the world, for tolerance had been the keynote of the evening, and it had come from Whig and Tory alike, from civilian and from fighting-man, from artist and expert on lost motions. The world is made up of these people, and the world is made up of circles. And if this little circle on the top floor of that office-building could weave so beautiful a chaplet of generous thoughts, could not all circles

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become as understandingly engaged and merge into one large round community of harmonious belief?

"If so," I communed with myself, as I walked along, "if so I might as well remain in England as—" Then I pulled myself up shortly, and I said aloud, while standing on the curbstone preparing to cross Piccadilly, "Louise Closser Hale, you're an American, and don't you forget it!"

But when I had crossed the street I was even more unstable about myself, for I had looked first to the right and then to the left, instinctively, whereas in America we must look first to the left and then to the right to avoid the traffic. It was no longer difficult to reverse the order as when one first comes over. It was no longer like trying to rub your head and pat your stomach at the same time. The trouble would be to look to the left and then to the right when I crossed the street at home.

It became "curiouser and curiouser" as I began to watch myself. I decided a dress in a window was dear, although I had not put the pounds into dollars. I was thinking in English money. Moreover, I had called it a "frock" in my mind and not a dress. And—oh, more of the moreovers!—I thought it was very smart when it probably wasn't at all. I began making fierce speeches to myself, for this habit of absorption was creeping over me: "You'd better be going home—sponge!" or, sarcastically, "I suppose you'll have an English accent next." Immediately after that last snort at myself I remember calling to a maid who tapped at my door, "I'll be out 'directly,'" then terrified her by yelling upon this English slip, "'Right away,'" I said, "'right away.'"

When summer came on I visited friends farther

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afield, going down on Sunday-morning trains and coming back late Monday afternoon. Something warned me that I must begin to wean myself away from London. I was sure of it after the day I spent at the Temple. I think the first visit of an American to the Temple is rather dreary. There doesn't seem to be enough air, and you are nervous about the sewerage. Besides, you have your guide-book, which is a nuisance. If you keep on revisiting this locality and still dislike it, you had better go home, anyway—a Broadway café is the only place for you. But on the day you are too fascinated to leave it, even to take tea with a beautiful British officer, on the day you loiter in Fountain Court, pick out your rooms in Brick Court, chat with the wig-maker in Pump Court, you had also best arrange for your transportation, for London is insidiously enfolding you in its arms.

The wig-maker was working on the white horse-hair adornment of a K. C. He asked me if I knew what a K. C. meant, and I replied that I did—that it meant Knights of Columbus. But he was very stern with me. He said the war got into everything, and K. C.—the original K. C.—was King's Counsel. The wig he was making showed no great novelty of form, and I asked him if he couldn't have the hair bobbed; at that he was intensely annoyed, and said they must all be alike until they became judges, when they have completely new wigs. I then wanted to know if he could not add more horsehair to the barrister's wig, and thus save the judge six guineas. But he said it would be impossible, anyway: when one become a judge the head-size immediately increased. He wanted to sell me a book on the Temple, and I told him if I learned any more about it I should never go back to

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America at all; and he asked me if it was necessary to return. I replied spontaneously, thank the Lord! that it was necessary *because* I was an American. But as I walked up Cockspur Street, past the ticket-offices, I did not find little tendrils of longing stretching out from my heart, as I had sometimes felt them before, and I was almightily worried.

Going down into the country didn't help things any. Apart from the difficulty of getting to and fro, which can be obviated by traveling first-class, I approved of all my country houses, and wished to smuggle them into America. I would also like to take the Sunday eleven-o'clock going down to Brighton, little engine and all, for the train is called "the Pullman," and we could have a great deal of fun with these cars, introducing their slim, delicate selves to our original burly Pullmans, which have felt no refining influences of an old civilization. But they are a pearl of great price, for it costs three dollars and fifty cents to ride one hour on them.

Sometimes I tried to discourage myself from this hold London was getting on me by recalling the coffee we make, but the friend I visit near Brighton prepares the finest coffee I have ever tasted, and it is "British-made." The pulverized bean is put in an earthenware jug and boiling water is poured slowly on to it. Then for about fifteen minutes it rests in a pan of water boiling fiercely on the stove, stirred once or twice, and served from the jug at the table. I am told this is old Cornwall fashion, although probably invented by the Cornish householder Arnold Bennett.

My friend has merits besides coffee. She has a view of the harbor, where the great cement pyramids of mystery are being made. (Fancy an Admiralty secret

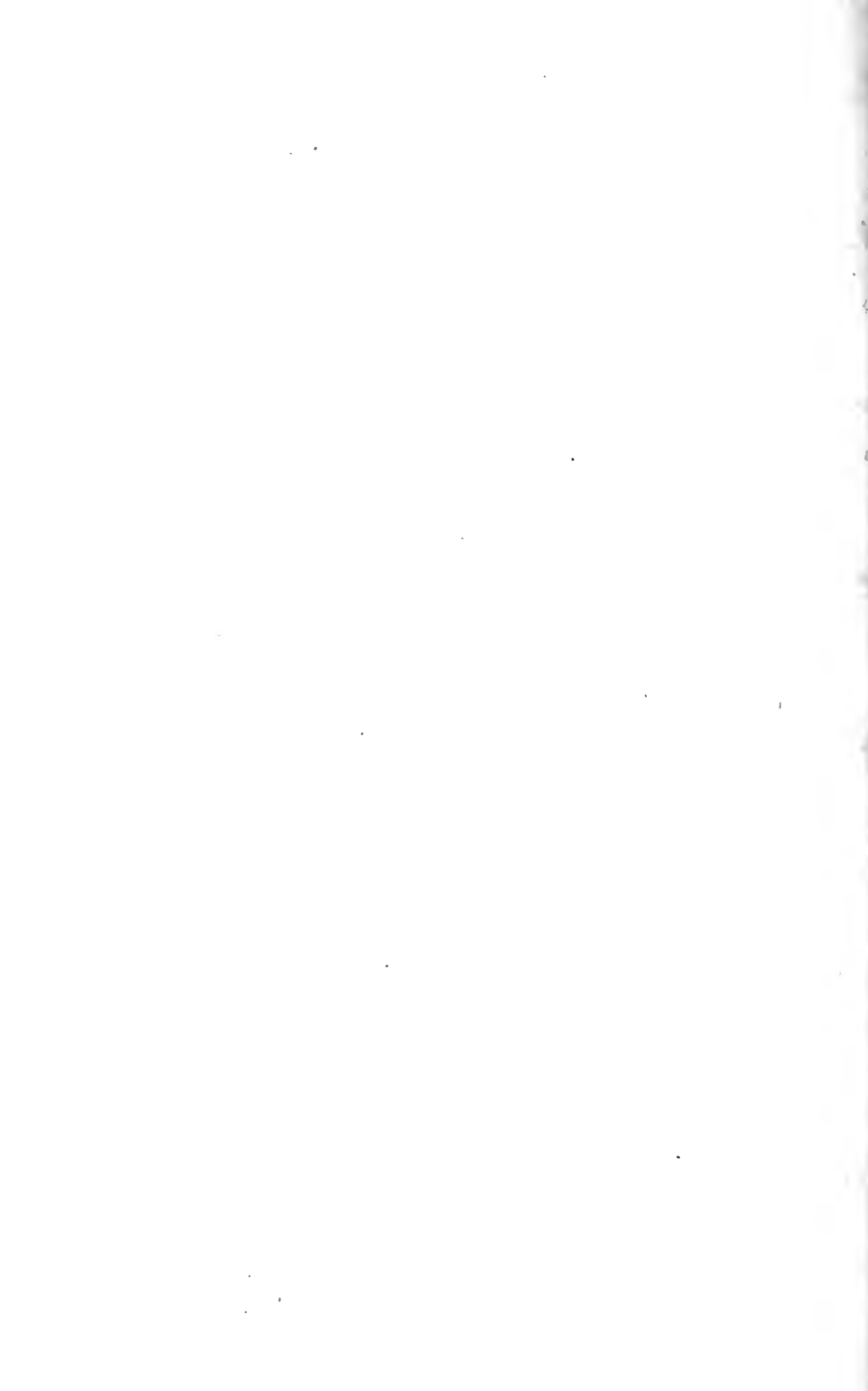
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remaining a secret, when a public votes twenty million pounds for the construction of these pyramids!) And she has a wiry dog who sat down and looked at me searchingly when I first entered the house. "Will she walk me as far as the chalk-pit?" he asked, for he measures friendship by this. And there is a garden, where you must throw a ball and yet not knock off the fruit. Within the garden, or the house, is my hostess. She never leaves her wheeled chair, and yet, like another dear shut-in whom I visit in London, she can tell me more of what is going on in the world than I could discover if I spent my life running round the earth. She lets me contend fiercely for my country, and she flies the American flag when I come, but her walls are hung with the battle-axes of her ancestors, and while she doesn't use them on me, I doubt if she in the least sympathizes with my radical views. I am her guest, and can do no wrong; and that is a bit of feudalism which I trust will never die.

I go to a house down in Surrey, arriving early at Waterloo Station, for the tracks are so many and the village so small which marks my destination that Waterloo knows very little about it. I should like to transplant this house to the hills of Westchester, just to show what we can do in England. It is long and low and thatched, vine-covered, and, thank God! steam-heated. Luck comes to you when you are within those walls, for a house-leek grows upon a bit of the roof that is tiled, and you cannot but prosper, since the house-leek thrives there. The lawns and meadows slope down and down to the sea, so that you can glimpse the Isle of Wight on clear days. At least, the hostess claims that, but she is of Italian

THE RIVER, WHICH, OF COURSE, MEANS THE THAMES





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blood—her honest English husband is obliged to deprecate the fancy.

Then there is Sonning, with a start from Paddington Station, compartment doors banging agreeably as the Sunday-morning traveler goes down for a day on the river—the river, which, of course, means the Thames. One steps down, not up, into the house I visit there, yet there is no sensation of damp, and one can but admire these sixteenth-century habitations, with their fine new drains, electric lights, and tiled bath-rooms.

It is this combination of Old-World beauty with New-World comforts which “gets” the American. At times I almost wish this combination wasn’t so prevalent. There would be less to fight against, and I give an eager ear to servants’ troubles, hoping they will be insuperable, as they were in my case, and make me want to go home. But they do not seem to find it as difficult to keep servants in the country as we do. Besides, we have all grown simpler in our tastes, and a British host does not object, as our men do at home, to helping himself and others on a Sunday from the sideboard, with never a servant in sight.

The only labor trouble that was agitating my hostess on my first visit to Sonning was with her gardener. I expected to see a bent old man, too blind to know a tulip bulb from a potato, and was touched by her liberalism when she said she always asked the gardener in to meals. However, the gardener elected to go to the inn for lunch, and, I hope, had a couple of half-pints, as a gardener should on a Sunday, although I discovered him to be a lady of very superior birth, if not superior knowledge of gardening. It was something of a relief not to have her at table, as she had been given her notice to quit. What happy results

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to be found in the garden—and to me it was a riot of bloom—had been effected through the efforts of a small boy the lady-gardener had engaged as assistant.

I don't know why the aristocrat refused to weed and clip and spray, as I suppose even an aristocratic gardener's job depends upon her efforts. More than that, she was one of the rebellious girls who are saying that they will not return to the roof-trees of their fathers, no matter whether they have jobs or not. I should think any girl would prefer to garden by the river at Sonning to a life at "The Towers," or whatever baronial hall she came from, even if she had to labor in it, and I shouldn't think it would be very difficult, anyway, to look after flowers that had been told for centuries how to behave.

Indeed, everything is cultivated in this country—speech, lawns, manners, gooseberries, plays, acquaintances in Tubes—everything. And the worst of it was, I was beginning to love it, yet not so much to love it, which isn't very dangerous, but to accept it all as a matter of beautiful course. What I would notice when I got home would be the difference. For there I would find a raggedness in the fields and an unfinished air to the little towns, and the imperfections of our country roads; and I would miss this evenness of life. To live happily in America one must find his exhilaration in a different loveliness. He must feel the same glow that came into the face of a young Englishman who had had ten years in the United States. "We can see cities grow out here!" he exclaimed to one of his nation who felt the loss of Sussex downs and Surrey hills and the polished, padlocked Thames.

It was on the twenty-eighth day of June, the day

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peace was signed at Versailles—on my way to the usual *matinée*—that I turned on the street to look after a passing boy because his accent was American. I no longer noticed an English accent, and I had ceased to notice whether a person was English or American if his accent was English. The American intonation, I realized to my horror, was becoming abnormal. It was on that day I sent a letter to my English management asking that I might return before the autumn. I did not say I wanted to go home because I was growing English, for I wasn't—any Englishman could tell me that. But I didn't want to say "frock" for "dress," or "directly" for "right away," or think in English money. Yet I was beginning to do it. I was like the little American boy of six, who, after a few weeks in France, began, to his great perplexity, introducing French words into his baby-English sentences. He rebelled against it: "Why must I do this?" I heard him cry.

So I wrote the letter, and I'm glad I sent it before night fell on that Peace Day, before the traffic was shut off in the streets and the people began gathering for their soft, happy merrymaking. Write me down an American, but the English know better than do we how to carry the transcendent moments of life. And I suppose that, too, is cultivated.

When Mafeking was relieved during the Boer War I was in London. I was in the audience at a play, and a member of the company came quickly to the footlights, gasping, "Ladies and gentlemen—I have the honor to announce the relief of Mafeking." Whereat we all rose as one man and asked God to Save the Queen. Some sort of a performance continued, but the roar growing in the Strand dulled the meaning

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of the lines, and when we went out we saw the kind of a scene that the king of stage-directors could rehearse with all the skilled actors of the world, and then get nothing of gaiety and abandonment in comparison. They were the English, rejoicing after weeks of strange doubt of their invincibility. They were utterly given over to enjoying themselves, without the aid of alcohol or rattles, for there had been no time for such diversion.

Ever since then, when one goes roistering in London, it is said, "He is out mafficking," yet I, who knew the tin horn of the Middle West on election nights, did not find them very roisterous even then; and on this sweet June eve they simply came together and jigged in the streets, swung their partners, changed hats, did a little kissing and jigged again. I walked home after the play that night, and the whole length of Piccadilly was given over to little knots of dancers, strangers meeting for the first time, one man—generally a soldier—playing on a mouth-organ. Back and forth went the two opposing rows, back and forth, with little springy steps. There was no shouting, no swearing, just back and forth quite silently, while the soldier with the mouth-organ danced and played.

It took me an hour to get home, for I lingered with the crowds watching the dancers and found it easy to talk with every one. A stranger with an accent I couldn't locate told me out of a clear sky that he was a Secret Service man, which freedom of expression is hardly one's idea of a man on secret service bent; but, fib or no, he informed me that he had conducted one of our great financiers all along the British front during the war, that the civilian gentleman was many times under fire, yet he never batted an eyelid. "In

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a manner of speaking, he's the kind of a man a bullet couldn't touch," he said, admiringly. "He's the kind of a man that nothink couldn't touch."

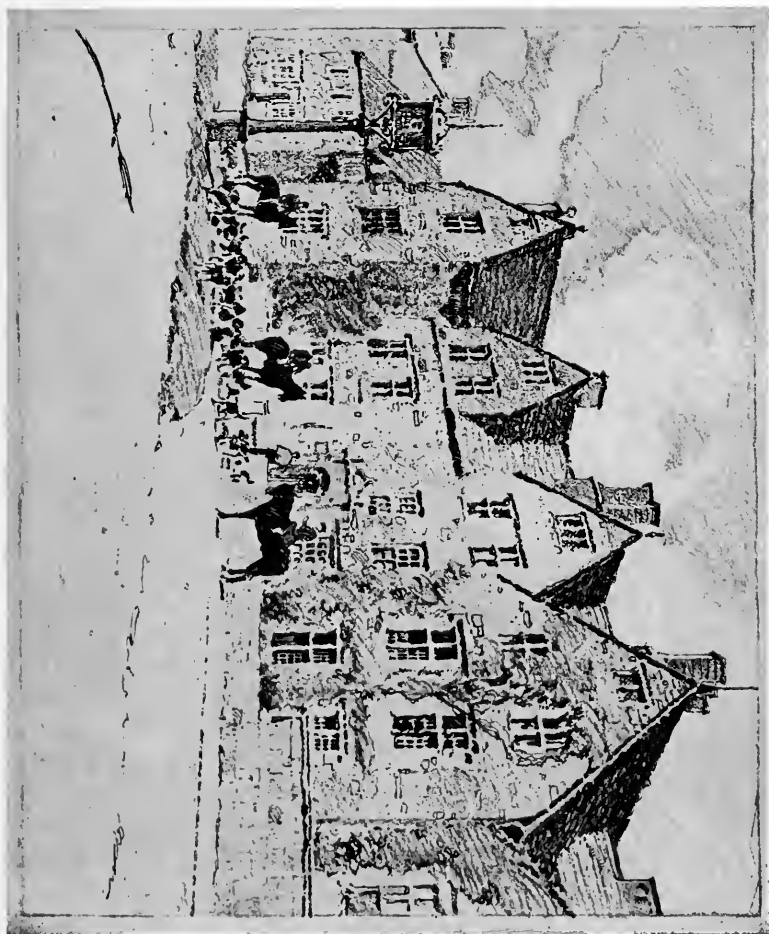
And while I know "nothink" of the invulnerability of this rich compatriot, I immediately grew sorry for him. For if he could not be touched he could probably touch nothing, neither the ceiling nor the floor, neither the heights nor depths of life. All those people dancing jig-steps in the streets had been touched by the bullets of the war, and now they were transcendently happy for a little while. Sorrow will come to them once more—rain in their lives, then again sun, and a rainbow. I, a very tired woman, was standing on the edge of the dancers, whereas in earlier days I would have been of the dancers. Surely time had touched me. Yet I decided that my age is about the last thing I'd give up, for within those years my feet have known the earth, my head the heavens.

Chapter XIX

“**W**HO’LL buy my lavender?” sang a vender in the street. His voice was full and resonant and the old, old words with the old, old tune discouraged further idle dabs at a modern typewriter.

The upper chambermaid came to the window with me. She said that it reminded her of home, not that they sing it there; nobody would buy lavender in Mitchim—that’s where it grows. She enjoyed seeing it in the city streets, she went on to say—it was country-like. When it comes right down to it she’d rather see those fragrant stalks in the streets than in the fields, but it was nice to know that the country was going on—somewhere—and that she could go back to it if she wanted to—which she didn’t. This was slightly abstruse yet more edifying than the subject she had been previously pursuing. That had been all about the club portress—a fine, strapping Irish girl, free from guile to look at, who, in reality, smoked cigarettes. “Smokes ’em furious, ma’am.”

“Who’ll buy my lavender?” asked the man, looking so directly at me that I was obliged to shout back, “I will,” and sent the maid down with some pennies. My clarion response caused such of the street as were taking the air to look up at me, and the chauffeur, waiting at the house with the blue tablet, throttled down his engine so suddenly that he shut off his power,



GOING STRAIGHT ONTO MAUVEISH MOORS



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and then stared reproachfully, for he had no self-starter.

He got out and began to crank the car and the butler and footman continued carrying out small trunks and dressing-cases, laundry-bags, and all the odd paraphernalia which traveling Englishmen burden themselves with. They stored certain impedimenta within the limousine, but such as had to go on top were left for the chauffeur, as the duties of English servants are sharply defined and they had nothing to do with roofs. The master and mistress then came out, and the lady, very unsuitably gotten up in a tulle scarf (and other garments of a like ephemeral character), said *she'd* buy some lavender, too. It is a custom for the best people to buy lavender, and she would not depart from it even though she was going straight onto mauveish moors. She handed the dried, acrid grasses to a maid fitly garbed in a print of purplish hue—indeed all the maids of that house wore those colors, contrasting very well with the painter's maids next door who wore scarlet linen. Then the servants bowed to the master and mistress and the great lady waved her hand to the cook, hoping no doubt that she would remain in her service, for she looked a good cook. "Be sure to keep the flags flying," the master exhorted. And off they went to escape, as every one knew in the street, the crowds of Peace Week.

The chambermaid returned with my purchase and had gathered—besides it—that the vender had just been demobbed. As the discharge occurred at lavender-time he took it as a h'omen and he returned immediately to his musical trade. He had told her, too, that he hadn't been afraid when fighting in the trenches exceptin' a-losing his voice from damp. The

two had both watched the occupants of the tableted house roll away and both had agreed that the country was dull enough at any time, but to go down to it this week, and miss the Victory Procession!—she snorted and whisked the bed-linen about.

I was then obliged to tell her that I was not going to see the procession either, that I was going to make every effort to avoid the crowds in attendance upon it, because—very piously—I had a *matinée* and a night performance and must keep in condition for my work. All of us in life must think first of our sacred duty, I continued, and I might have gone on with more worthy aphorisms was I not finding, for the first time in my existence, a certain hollowness in these utterances. My *work*—MY work was taking on a minor importance as compared with mere festivities, and this desire to keep away from crowds, when I put my smugness into words, sounded pica-yunish—just picayunish.

I was considerably confused over this and the maid did not encourage my attitude by any eulogistic utterances anent my stern denials. If she had been of my walk in life I believe she would have said, "Stuff!" She certainly looked "Stuff!" and she continued to flap sheets distressingly about like signals for help. She wished to be protected from this woman who refused to abandon herself to the madcap mood of the world.

I went out for a walk in Green Park, my writing uncompleted. Even in its farthest recesses the air was full of the sound of hammers, yet no one seemed to be disturbed by it but the sheep and myself—myself and sheep pursuing our accustomed ways! Over in the Mall the decorators, in a fury of energy,

were forgetting they were British workmen with stern beliefs as to a restricted output. Thousands of wood ammunition-cases were being utilized as the foundation for tiers of seats along the Mall, which were to be reserved for the wounded and for the mothers of sons killed in action. The royal pavilion was already shining white and gold at the foot of the Victoria Memorial. High above the living royalties, Victoria, in stone, would see that passing show—she who had been assured by her generals that no war with the British Empire could endure longer than a month, and had watched in grief the protracted struggle with the Boers.

I walked up to a great hotel in Knightsbridge where the procession would first unfurl its banners. Every available bit of space in hotel window and balcony was for rent—the sum amassed to go to the blind of St. Dunstan's Hospital. It gave me a sudden pain down the nose and, assuming a languid interest, I asked the price of a very good seat. But there were no very good seats or very bad seats—they had all been sold. Earlier in the week I might have procured one for five guineas. I turned away trying to feel twenty-five dollars richer, but I did not feel so very rich although I had a steady job—a steady, yes, an inflexible job, with a weekly recurrent envelope.

There was a luncheon-party on that day and the hostess pardoned me affably for my tardiness when I explained that I had been standing at a hotel door watching the American officers arrive. "I was not able to get out of the crowd," I stiffly explained. It was not the truth; I could have gotten out, but some good reason must be offered, ordinarily, for spoiling the fish course. Yet no one seemed to care about the

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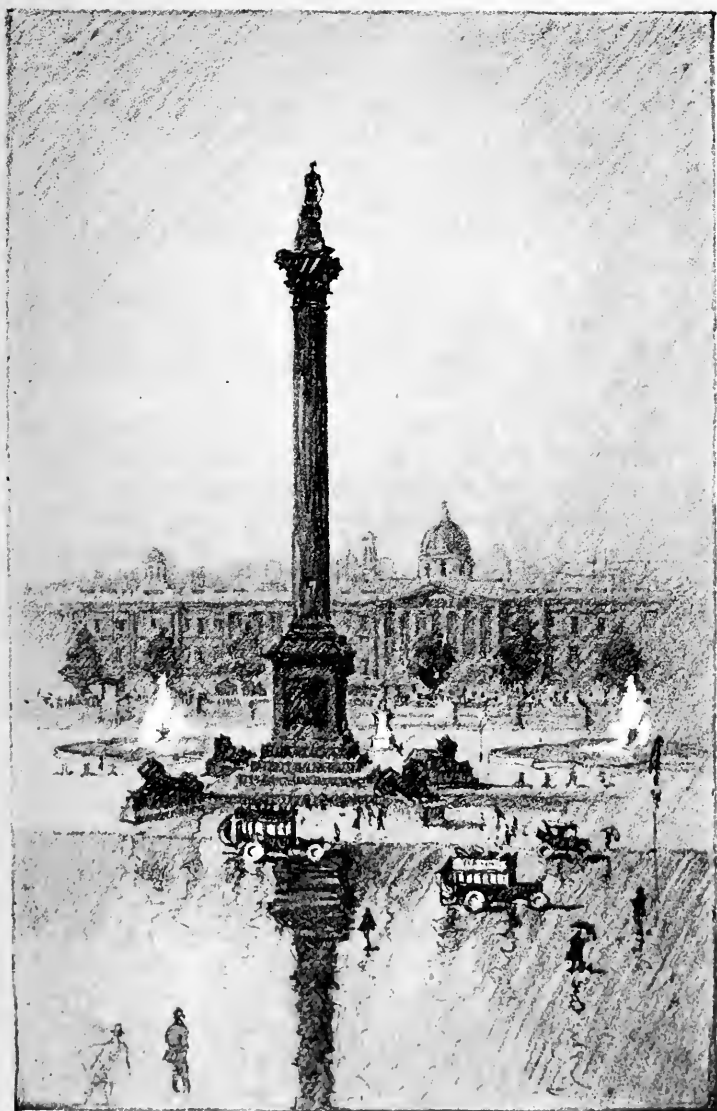
food at this luncheon—all interests were centered upon what they should put up for the lunch on Saturday; who would buy the pickles, who the sandwiches, who the cakes. This went on at every gathering throughout the week. Fashionable as well as lowly London was thrashing itself into a fever of excitement over the advisability of stuffed eggs in the baskets.

I protested over this. "You're like a picnic-party in La Porte, Indiana! It's all so young!"

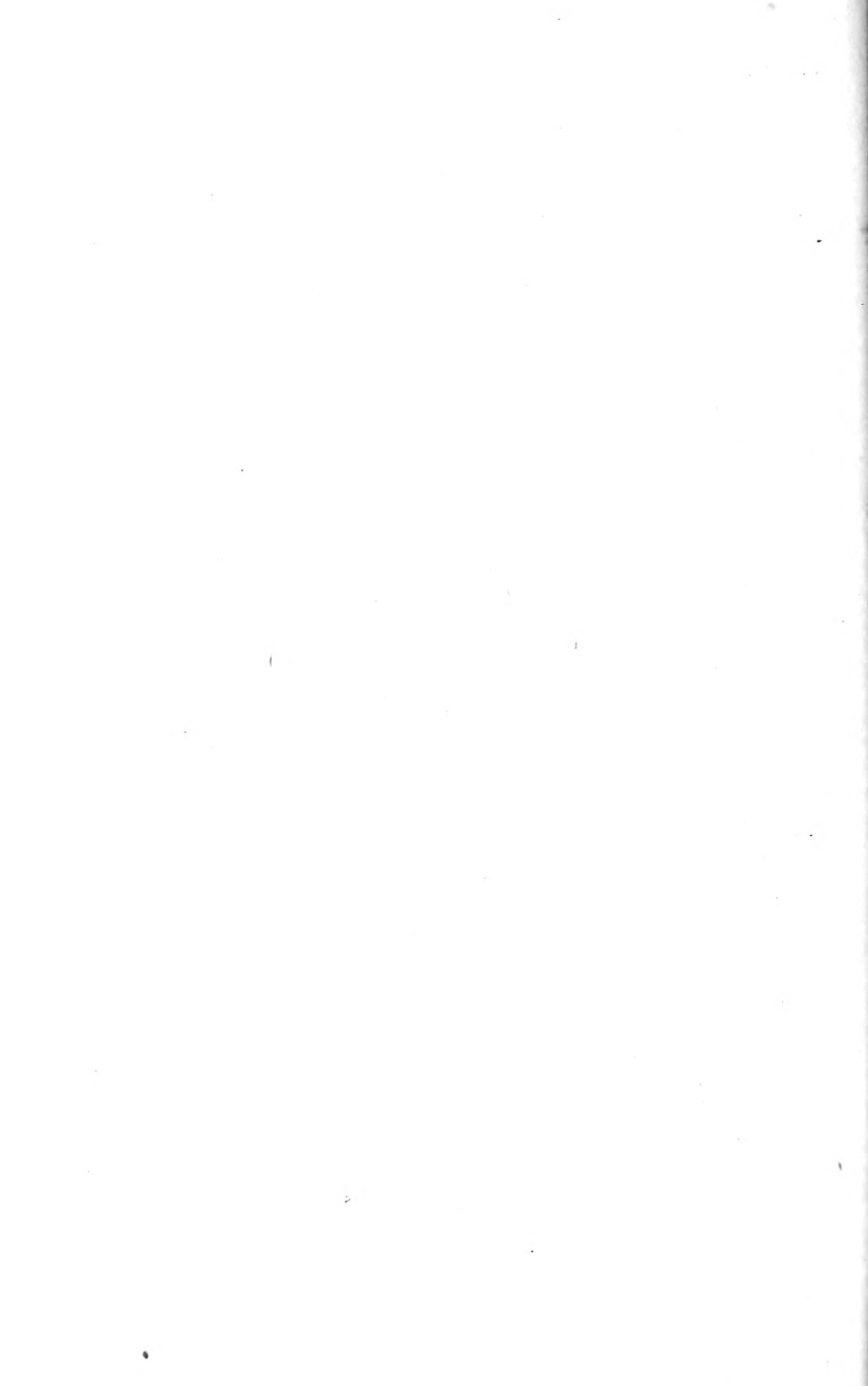
"It's the day to be young," one of them answered, blithely. "Now I contend that sardines—"

Yet, always, always through these discussions of edibles ran a somber note—a shadow which occasionally eclipsed the sunshine of their gay talk: "If it should rain!" some one would whisper. Now as a rule the Briton is seldom distressed over what is only a possibility, and rain does not enter into British lives until it is wetting their bonnets. There seems to be, to them, always an element of surprise in the discovery that the clouds are emptying themselves upon the patient lawn fête. "Why, it's raining!" they exclaim, and crowd into the marquee. The lawn fête is then in American eyes a failure. They are sorry for the hostess the while reflecting that she had to learn her lesson. Yet the following year she gives another garden-party—which is spent, per usual, anywhere but in the garden.

Since the war the Londoners pay even less attention to watery demonstrations against their comfort. With all England, men and women, in uniform, umbrellas went out of fashion and are still the exception in the street. Or, in their proud optimism, they may consider themselves impervious to a mean chemical



"IF IT SHOULD RAIN!"



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combination of oxygen and hydrogen. They may be like a kinswoman of mine who, having recently embraced a religion of faith, was besought by me to seek shelter from a shower. "I don't get wet," said the aggravating *religieuse*.

Of the more import, then, were the prayerful silences which followed the occasional whisper: "If it should rain!" All London was suffering, even as they brought forth their bunting, from an apprehension as vague as the outline of the Zeppelins which once brooded above them, yet as devastating to their happiness. For all London was suffering from the menace of their more ancient foe—the weather.

Although I was by now noisily claiming to be "fed up" with processions, this terrible thought of a wet day began beating through my brain. In my eagerness for a clear day, just for the sake of *les autres*, I got into a panic of distrust over my achieving in life those things for which I have most fondly hoped; and I wondered if I had not better pray that it *would* rain so that it contrarily *wouldn't*. Yes, and do it aloud, if that would help things any, even though my mates in the theater would translate my wish as one emanating from a low dog who—which—would be going through its tricks at a *matinée*, bone-dry, except when standing in those spots where the roof leaked.

I must not call it an inhospitable roof, however, even though porous, for on the night I was cogitating on the best way for me, personally, to effect fine weather on Saturday I came into the theater to find the littlest girl reading a notice on the call-board. It was a very remarkable notice—nothing like it had ever been hung there before—not in two hundred years—and nothing like it will ever hang there again,

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probably. It was signed by the lessee of the old house inviting the members of the company and the stage crew who lived remotely from the theater to bring their blankets and spend Victory night under its broad, sheltering wings. Traffic in the heart of the city would be shut off at nine in the morning, and the Tubes, while running all night under patriotic, voluntary service, would be the only means of moving some eight million citizens and countless visitors from one distance to another.

I do not know why I was so thrilled by this. It may not thrill the reader, but the enormity of the hour began to take hold of me. I felt conscious of the restricted plan for the day as laid down by one meanly hampered, it seemed now, by a hysterical sense of duty. I felt like some small infant tied in a chair and hearing the far-off band of the circus. It was then, as I stood by the side of the littlest girl, that I ventured a fear it might rain—although not yet craftily expressing the actual desire that it *should* rain. I would withhold this master-stroke until later, when the weather probabilities became gloomy actualities. But I got no farther with the littlest girl than the first negative breath, for she hushed me up as though I had committed treason, and by the time she was through pumping new-thought principles into me I felt that the success of the entire parade rested upon my putting the “good thought” on the sun—and “treating” the rain with firm suggestions to stay away.

“Make a cheerful asseveration,” she bade me. “It doesn’t matter very much *what* you say, so that you are concentrating on the good, the true, and the beautiful.”

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Mindful of her advice, I kept repeating inwardly, as I spoke the lines of the play that night, a phrase that had a familiar, hopeful beat which I did not actually define until the final curtain, when the company gathered about me to ask why I said it.

"Why I said what?" I demanded, in turn.

"Said what you did instead of the tag?" The tag is the last line of the play, and in this instance is, "My country, 'tis of thee," repeated in unison.

"Well, what did I say?" I snapped.

"You said, 'Curfew shall not ring to-night,'" they jeered.

And I suppose I did repeat it, which I still think better than an oft-chanted, "The shun shall shine on Shaturday!"

When we left the theater that evening we were swept up in a happy procession of singing soldiers and their girls marching to Foch's hotel to bring him out on the balcony with their cheers. It was delightful folly, for all of us knew that Foch was at the Alhambra. Everybody knew how every general was spending his evening. We in the street spoke only of men of rank through this week. Beatty was dining quietly with friends; Pershing was at a dance where a beautiful lady knelt and removed his spurs; the Italians were being banqueted; all of this talk while murmurs of regret were heard among the plain people that Sims was not present—probably the most popular American London has found pleasure in honoring.

The crowd waited until Foch returned, and sang to him, but I went on up the Haymarket where at the head of the street the traffic had been stopped for a moment while the United States troops marched out of a music-hall. That I could not see them, hop

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up in the air as I might, gave me a gnawing sensation akin to hunger, and which, like hunger, was not to be assuaged by any pictured representation of food. I was not going to be content, as I had tried to comfort myself, with a very good view of those boys in the films the following Sunday evening. It must be flesh and blood with me. "Fee—fi—fo—fum" mingled through my dreams with "Curfew shall NOT ring to-night!"

It was a feeble-minded boy in *David Copperfield* who sold the spoons and spent his ill-gotten gains riding on the top of a bus from Putney to the Bank. It may have been a feeble-minded woman who spent what part of the next day she could riding up and down on No. 9 bus, peering over the railings of Kensington Gardens, to see our troops who were quartered there. The gates of the gardens were closed and locked to all but soldiers. They were within in the company of Peter Pan, and possibly no one had a key but Barrie, who must have been too staggered at the strange invasion to use it. Barrie's little friends could not travel the Broad Walk, nor sail boats on the Round Pond, and outside the palings rebellious perambulators held stormy meetings and drafted letters of protest to the *Times*. Little girls looked wistfully through the iron interstices, but they could see no more of the men in uniform than could the feather-brained woman lurching along on No. 9.

I do not know what determination entered into their baby souls to meet those boys later on, even if they had to marry them, but a mighty resolve came to me to see my troops on the march, though the effort would, in a measure, disturb the set order of a matinée day. For by this time I undoubtedly wanted

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to view the procession, not as the infant tied in her chair would want to view a circus parade—for one's temporary enjoyment—but to be ever so small a part of the most momentous day in history. Surely every spectator added to the throngs who would for-gather would pay, by his presence, molecular tribute to the men who were passing in review—and to those who would not pass along the ways of life again.

It was at this period of growth that I fell a victim to the periscope scheme. I heard of it first on top of the bus and followed two decayed gentlewomen down to the shop where periscopes were to be purchased. The gentlewomen objected to crowds, they thought them indelicate, but they agreed that a periscope could be no more bothersome than a sun-shade and would probably attract no more attention—which was quite true unless I could mentally treat the sun. Over in Westminster the army were selling off hundreds of this new form of military equipment, but we contented ourselves with modest affairs that, by careful manipulation, would bring mirrored generals to our close observance even though we stood on the far edge of the vulgar herd. With one of these implements in hand I planned that on Saturday I would walk toward the Mall, going *matinée*-ward, and, as in a dark glass darkly, cheer our troops upon their way. The thought was not exhilarating, however. I can imagine nothing more pathetic than cheering into a small mirror hoisted high in the air, and I did not notice until I unwrapped my periscope at home that the pictured directions showed a gentleman gaining happy, peering results by lying down in a rough field. My imagination did not embrace with any joy the prospect of becoming one of a string of

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prostrate old ladies stretched along the line of march, but it was the next best thing to viewing the heroes from a seat which I felt I could not afford, and if uncomfortable striving counts for anything I would surely be paying a tribute to the greatness of the hour.

While I was now concentrating whole-heartedly on good weather and was beginning to feel that I was going to bring it about (perhaps), I had not the supreme faith of the littlest girl, who was by this time asserting that "the good, the true, and the beautiful" were going to arrange for her to see the show and not spend five guineas for a seat either. She said I could see it, too, if I would just believe.

"But how can I believe when I don't?" I wailed. And to this she replied that faith would come with study, which did me very little good as, cram as I might, I could never manage it until several weeks after the parade was over.

That was the night—Thursday night—that I climbed up little ladders to the theater roof, at the risk of making a frightful stage wait, to see if it would be possible to catch a glimpse of marching troops from that high vantage point. I scrambled down again and played the next scene with dirty hands, my purpose defeated, for I could not have caught so much as the glint of a tin hat passing through the Admiralty Arch. But the few minutes alone up there, the anxious call-boy at the foot of the ladder, had given me something else besides dirty hands. As I looked down from the serene height upon the London I had grown to love, it seemed to me that it was holding its breath in suspense; that from now on until the first crash of chords Saturday morning the movement of the city would be but perfunctory—

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that the masses of the people within the shops and houses were spiritually at pause. This comes to me every Saturday before the break of Easter Day—this waiting. The sensation surely must preface the birth of a child and that instant before the zero hour of an attack.

So, as well as unclean digits, I brought to the audience in the next scene a woman with a high resolve—who was playing her rôle far too emotionally as the result of it; although the darlings out front would have certainly forgiven me had I advanced to the footlights and said, “Ladies and gentlemen—I am going to see that *procession*!”

If the faith of the littlest girl amounts to anything it must have been that I had not really resolved to see the procession until my visit to the roof and, having firmly made up my mind, the way was made clear for me to see it. American mail came in before the performance was over, and when I opened my letters at the end of the play out of one of them fell a check. It represented the price of a picture of one who would no longer make them, who was no longer here, yet whose care of me went on now and then in this quiet demonstration of the deathlessness of those who have created.

I was glad that I was alone with Mrs. Wren when the envelope was opened, for, all through the season, this dear woman was, somehow or other, part of every harmonious moment. She had ever lent her goodness and her interest to making the hour happier. There were always two of us gleeful, if I was full of glee. As I looked at the check, with the dollars transcribed into pounds, she was busying herself hiding bottles. Mrs. Wren and I had been smuggling in

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liquid refreshment for several days, although of this she had not entirely approved. She had said, out flat, I had better spend the money for a seat and not mess it about in a general merrymaking, and this was generous in her as she and the other dressers and all the stage crew were to come in on the bottles Victory Night. But it had been my theory, earlier in the week, that several molecules paying tribute to the day would be a better way of celebrating than the spending of a like sum on a small camp-stool which would be enjoyed by but one molecule.

When I called Mrs. Wren to look at the check and told her that it represented an etching made many years ago, she did not exclaim over it as a little bit of all right, or suggest that I might now get that gown at the sale in Bond Street, but she touched the bit of paper awesomely as she whispered, "It's like a voice, isn't it, madam?"

"What does it say?" I asked.

"It says you're to see the procession," said this countrywoman. "It crossed the water to say that."

I suppose the littlest girl would have thought so, too, but I never told her. It was Mrs. Wren's beautiful secret and mine. And I went out into the early morning the next day to search for a place, feeling not quite alone—that some one was with me who had so longed for this day that he was not, even now, quite unconscious of the earthly beauty of its approach.

The following morning I went out even earlier, the exaltation of the moment not soaring, dragged down a bit by the material struggling for stuffed eggs in my lunch-box. The words that John Drinkwater has given to our martyred chief in his play of "Abraham Lincoln" recurred to me as I made my way

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practically toward the Tube. "For four years life has been but the hope of this moment. It is strange how simple it is when it comes." So luncheon, flags, periscope, police pass, and myself went into the Tube out of the pale but durable sunshine for which I had arranged. As my Irish waitress had said when she brought in my early coffee, "The day is better than it looks."

The trains were not greatly crowded, and until I reached the surface at Trafalgar Square I thought I was the only one in London who had sufficient brains to start early. I recall a family of six who, before they entered the lift which carried us to the street, agreed that they would move toward the lions in the square (but not so as to give to the world an inkling of their plan) and climb upon the backs of one of the beasts. They were not greedy—they would not sit upon all the great bronze animals.

I should like to know what became of that family. I did not know what became of me for the first few minutes after I was swept into the maelstrom. I remember getting my hands up high enough to show a constable my pass proving that I had a seat on a balcony about sixty feet away in Whitehall, and a certain cynical look in his eyes as he gave me full permission to go ahead. Yet half an hour afterward I was still marking time a few feet farther back than my original starting-place. Trafalgar Square was one solid mass of people, with no lions whatever in sight, all having been covered up by the microbe, man, since before sunrise.

After a while I began talking. I began telling a disinterested public that I had a balcony seat in Whitehall. "Righto, old dear," one crushed pedestrian

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sang out finally. "Go and sit on it!" While this created some amusement, it also drew attention to me, and a kindly coster advised me if an ambulance passed through to Northumberland Avenue to get well down and be'ind it and keep moving. It sounded like a joke—something like the frolicsome advice to "go jump in the river." I had not paid a large price for a seat in Whitehall to crawl under an ambulance going down Northumberland Avenue. I was inclined to tell him so, angrily, but my ill humor would have been out of place among these amazing people, not one ten-thousandth of whom would get more than a roll of drums as their part of the day's festivities, and yet who were swaying and smiling with the rest through all this rib-cracking.

It was by swaying and smiling that I did insinuate myself behind, and almost under, an ambulance, and, like one on a penance, made my way insidiously against the crowd down the avenue. It is extraordinary when one gets into a side-street after a crush. One feels that the mob must surely have been dissipated, but while it was still going on, and very much so, when I turned into lower Whitehall I could manage, before I gained my seat, to buy a wreath and lay it among the thousands of others heaped about the Cenotaph.

It took the greatest day in history for me to learn that a cenotaph is a moument erected, not over the dead in the ground beneath, but in memory of those elsewhere buried. But after seeing this one I shall never define the word as anything but a simple piling up of hewed stone, lowly expressing a lowly grief. I mean lowly in the sense of humble, unalloyed by pomp and circumstance, a common unity of tears for

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those who died for a common cause. When the temporary monument becomes enduring granite this will probably be a spot, as it is to-day, where the English will unleash their emotions, where they will cry unashamedly. Some will lay down their scrubby bouquet of ill-assorted flowers, with "Joey," or "Bill," or "My boy" scrawled upon the card; others will place there a wreath of orchids, but the inscriptions will read the same, and all the offerings will blend together in the blessed democracy of flowers.

The British Empire has as yet no day for its dead, but from the scenes about the Cenotaph it was not hard to realize how they would give their hearts to a Memorial Day like ours. When some five hundred Americans took the train to Brookfield Cemetery on the 30th of May to decorate the graves of our soldiers buried there, a number of Englishmen came with us and entered into our service—with their own men in their hearts, I hope. An English gentlewoman, who had come down alone, stood by me when we reached God's acre for the Americans, and after looking over the names on the first headstones that met her eye, said she would be praying for all the world. For of the first ten graves of this row, two were Saxon, two Italian, one Irish, one Greek, one Pole, one Russian, one of a nationality unknown to us, and one well known, a German name. It may have been the recognition of this dead boy of Teuton origin which caused her to add that she hoped when the Empire did set aside a memorial day that it would be the 30th of May also, and that in time all nations might lay wreaths at one universal hour upon the graves of those who had died for their country. She felt that it would create a great unity of spirit.

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While she may be entirely wrong I thought it was most generous of her, and wished we all had a kindred League of Nations in our breasts. She hoped for something else—this fine lady whom I shall never see again probably. She hoped that some American who wrote was among the number that day, that the mothers whose boys lay there might know how beautiful was the place—how the birds sang—and how every year my own club of American women will lay a garland upon each grave. So, while not many mothers will read my story, perhaps, I have at least fulfilled her wish.

I reached the seat in my balcony five minutes before the mass broke past the police horses, leaning their flanks full weight against people, to form a deadlock of terrible pressure with the mass moving up Whitehall toward the Square. There were others upon the balcony, sharing the common danger of the ancient structure falling down upon the struggling throng below and putting them out of their agony with despatch. Still others of us were crowded into the window, three seats to a sill, and still more on a tier of seats back in the room commanding a limited view of the sidewalk on the opposite side of the street. They were all uncomfortable enough to be chatty and gay, but they were not Londoners, and they showed a pained disinclination to bounce into a conversation with me. However, I could but exclaim over the terrible pack beneath us. In the fear of death, even though it were not our death, I thought we might speak without exchanging cards.

While not Londoners they knew their London crowds and shook their heads over my expectation of mangled bodies. "Panic? No fear! They'll just

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surge," they said, cheerfully, and so the people did—surged like the tide—with no cry of distress, no hysteria, no mad elbowing or curses. Such a patient people eager to be happy!

I have an English seamstress over here whose words I hang upon, for they are pearls of wisdom. She tells me that the great fault with her compatriots is that they dislike work. They have never been taught to feel that labor is beautiful—it once was exacted from them practically under the lash, and from habit they still labor grudgingly. For that reason, said my seamstress, when they take their holiday, no matter how uncomfortable an outing it may develop into, they will not "grouse." At least, they are not at their hated jobs—they went out to enjoy themselves and, by the great horned spoon, they *will* enjoy themselves. I should prefer the depths of a coal-mine and the pay that goes with it to a full day's burial on a city sidewalk without remuneration, but the English don't, and that's all there is about it.

It made us sad—that is, it made me sad and my companions from the provinces slightly disturbed (although they may have felt worse than I did, but kept it bottled up) to see people dropping from exhaustion. Almost a hundred directly beneath us received the splendid, patient attendance of those men in black uniforms known as the Order of St. John of Jerusalem—those ancient Hospitallers of the Temple, and now the Red Cross of the city. As far as the eye could reach the physically unfit lay along in the gutters on either side the street or were heaped upon the islands in the middle of Whitehall. The pack was too great to take them to the ambulances in the side-streets, so there they stayed, some feebly strug-

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gling up, some wanly lying with faces turned toward the pageant as it came along.

While I am no skeptic, it may have occurred to a few clever ones that fainting had its good points. One was then pulled out from the depths and could lie, like a Roman at the Revels, and watch the whole show. One fat girl went off into a fresh swoon every time an effort was made to heave her off the canvas litter, always reviving in time to wig-wag to the generals passing at the head of their columns.

Many of these fainting ones were little boys and girls and I was the more sad, for this collapse spoke mutely of the underfeeding of the last four years. It was bitter that the sacrifices of those years should "throw-back" in this fashion on the day that stood as a reward for their long denials. But so it was, and the marching troops, on viewing these little spent bodies along the line of march, must have found in them a faint replica of grimmer fields of struggle.

It was in employing my periscope in an effort to count the prostrate ones far up by the square that I discovered the littlest girl, not lying in the gutter, for my periscope refused to show me anything I sought, but sitting on the top of a motor-car that had broken down in a very convenient place early in the day when traffic had not yet ceased, probably through the connivance of the owner. I recognized her purple cap and cape, and I felt, although the mirror did not reproduce it, her tremendous satisfaction with a religion that had secured her this free seat. The tail-end of the procession would have disappeared through the Admiralty Arch well before the matinée, and she would be smugly putting on her grease-paint as I would still be struggling toward the theater.

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This was the first time I had thought of grease-paint as part of the day's curriculum, and the idea was most repugnant. It was no day for mummery. I would rather be one of those lying in the gutter, crying, "We who are about to die, salute thee!" Still, I did not absolutely rebel; there was no flag of anarchy waving about me as yet, only my two small American ones, the sticks of which had prodded the stuffing out of the eggs in my struggles in the street. I am not a flag-waver by instinct, but I had carried the colors so that they would give me courage to "holler." It is so much easier to cheer when something is in your hands—and I was going to cheer even if I had no voice for the *matinée*.

Yet I was in a highly nervous state for fear that the public was not going to—that they would not, I should say—cheer my general and my troops. As the countries marched alphabetically, our nation would come first, and perhaps the people would not be warmed up to huzzas. I peeped sideways at my provincial companions. I longed to make a bargain with them, to say, "I'll cheer your general if you'll cheer mine." But I hadn't the courage—they would have thought me "quaint." Besides, if they were readers of character they would know that a woman emotional enough to keep dabbing her eyes because the decorations were so beautiful would cheer everybody, anyway.

I was still agonizing over the possibility of our troops not making a hit when a bee buzzed in the ear that was trained in the direction of the Houses of Parliament. I flapped at it, but as I flapped the buzz grew stronger. There was a strange little murmur in the street, too, low and yet above the songs and

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the shoutings. It rippled along to the square and there grew into a field of sound. There was such a concerted movement of the masses, such a turning of the cheek down Whitehall, that the color of the crowds took on a different tone; there was more white in it. Before we had seen only the tops of their hats. And now little boys and girls buried in the crowds for hours were being disinterred and lifted up on fathers' shoulders, and the swooners began to take notice. The buzz grew louder, but I would not flap it away, for I knew now that it was not a buzz—it was a voice. The one great voice of the world. Oh, thrilling *vox populi*! It was the people—the real rulers of destinies—not those tight souls sitting on the balcony; they will never be rulers—it was the “plain people” cheering the Americans.

Big Ben must have been chiming twelve, but for once no one heard it, as up Whitehall, out of the magnificent shadow of the clock-tower came a charger. It was not a well-behaved one, a charger going sideways, but with a big man riding it who had no concern with its curvetings. A big man with a spray of roses on his saddle pommel nodding to the hurrahing people, not saluting—less formal—smiling easily, confident, yet modest, as though to say, “We’re only the beginning—wait.” Or he may have been thinking, for Pershing has humor, “What does the Bible say?—the last shall be first?” And then our men came along and I don’t know whether I was yelling all the time, or the crowd was, or both of us together. I alone upon our balcony cheered the Americans, that I know, but it made no difference, there was plenty of noise—enough even for an American—from the plain people below. Yet when our troops halted for

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their rest my companions threw them cigarettes and fruit, and every one laughed the way those huge fellows, all of whom had played baseball from the day they were out of skirts, simply stuck out their arms and caught everything without moving their bodies.

It was while I was waving my flags and hurraing that I said, inside of me—my vocal cords being otherwise employed: "Why, this is the happiest moment of my life—of my whole life! And yet I'm not in the procession. I'm just watching it—just a bystander," and then: "Of course, that's it. Somebody must be a bystander or there wouldn't be any procession passing by. So, after all, you're part of it—part of the great scheme." At this I had to dab my eyes again before I could go on gratefully communing: "And how lovely that this should come to me now—this understanding! Not pop at me when I was younger, when standing on the sidewalk would have meant a failure. How lovely that this should come to me now, when I haven't so many other pleasant things to think about!"

This is all written too easily. It should not be clamped down into words at all. For I felt that my heart was being carried on butterfly wings, high, high up. My heart was different things. It was a balloon, too—a rosy one—so big that I feared that by one extra breath of laughing-gas it would float away altogether and drag me out of my expensive camp-stool. I groped about for an anchor, for some material thought to keep me down to earth. I suppose it was in searching for the material thought that I thought again of my miserable duty for the afternoon. I could now understand perfectly why the British hated work.

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I looked at Big Ben. It was getting on. Although I would not have to cross the line of march, it would take an hour of swaying and smiling and possibly fainting to make my way to the side-street forty feet away, and from there twist back to my work. A sneer spoiled one of my best cheers at the word "work." It made me sick. The procession was not half over and I was planning how I could get out and off to my contemptible occupation. (It was "contemptible occupation" by this time.) I couldn't even celebrate my great discovery of the joy accruing from being at once on life's sidewalk and part of life's pageant without having to watch the clock.

Yet I must celebrate it in some unusual fashion—this was the day of days. I looked up toward the littlest girl for help. I applied the periscope. She was gone. She, a child of the theater, was instinctively following in the beaten path. But this was no day for beaten paths, and if that was so— I caught my breath between the automatic cheers I was uttering. If this hour really was greater than my work, now was the time to prove it. I stopped cheering. I would celebrate it as only an actress could who has not missed a performance in her twenty-five years' experience. I spoke down to the crowds. "I will *not* go to the *matinée*!" I said.

Oh, it is nothing to you, you readers, unless you have gathered from these pages the scandalousness of such a proceeding, the daring of it! From now on, as I walk down Broadway, they will say, "There goes the woman who wouldn't go to the *matinée*." "Ill?" "No! Went to the parade!" I was fearless, and talked to myself, fiercely. "Let 'em shut up—I don't care. Do 'em good. A *matinée* on Victory Day!"

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I had now blown my nose and cheered up—and on—and had my second wind for Foch and Haig. Foch, unlike our idea of a Frenchman, was not demonstrative, but the people were. His horse and baton seemed to be in his way, and he may have been reserving himself for his superb gesture before the king, when he raised his baton high above his head, bringing it down again with a sweep of triumph. Yet this surely was too magnificent to have been anything but impromptu. Haig sat his horse well and saluted correctly, as a Briton should, and with his passing I knew what huzzas really were. Beatty came on foot. It seems strange that these men of the navy, who stand in the high places on their ships, have no method of conveyance on dry land which fitly expresses the dignity of their calling. It is as though their real place was not the brown earth, but the broad waters.

We had voices for them all. I have never known a crowd before not show signs of flagging, but at every strange uniform there was a fresh outburst along the eight-mile line of march. Yes, and when the provincial party on the balcony vented themselves in a fury of, "Good old Sussex," or "Good old Surrey," as a contingent from the regiment of the shires passed by, they could not keep their plaudits at all select. I joined in, too, for I was part of that procession, lock, stock, and barrel. I looked no more at Big Ben, save once when I gave my companions a last chance to talk to me. "It's two-fifteen," I said, defiantly, to them. "The orchestra's gone in!" But they thought me no madder than heretofore, one of them very amiably murmuring, "Quite!"

Yet, as I made my way weakly home in the late

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afternoon, I knew that I should be ready to return to my fold at night. It has its circumscribed advantages. That night I should be marching to and fro upon the stage and others would be sitting in expensive seats, if not actually cheering, at least not hissing me. And while that world is a mimic one in which I am ever so mild a marching warrior, it is a lucky gray-haired woman who can stand on the sidewalk AND march in the procession. Lucky is she, too, who at the ebb of life can be a part of lovers' lives and of adventures and of moons that are not real, since the realities are not for her, for drama stirs safely the emotions, like reflections in a mirror which are dissipated when the glass is shifted.

Yes, I must confess, even in the theater it is pleasant to have lovers about—if only to reflect how much better you could do the scene yourself if you were younger. But even when you are younger you could not play the scene as you could have played it in a real garden under a real moon, no matter how bad an actor the real lover would be. "Now, our leading man, for instance—" In this way my mind was working as I went about full of contentment, and years, and stuffed eggs, and flags. I would have liked to have given the leading man a pointer or two for the sake of whatever girl he would select to be his very best. A good man, a very good one, I decided, but a little angular in his love-making. A little too correct—needed limbering up.

At this point of my musing I was moving, with periscope, toward Hyde Park that I might hear the massed bands and the ten thousand voices. But, following the order of the day, there were other masses than bands, and I had no more made the refuge in Park

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Lane by the fountain than word went round that the royalties were coming. The refuge was not crowded, but heads were taller than mine and again I set my periscope, this time to catch a king. And again the wilful periscope showed me strange sights—unfolded them, as I swept the crowded pavement opposite in my effort to get a focus—as a series of taunting replies to one who had come to England to escape the slings and arrows of an outrageous Cupid. 'Arry walked with 'Arriet—arms entwined; soldiers and their girls—arms entwined; provincials and their nice young ladies—arms entwined; all England—arms entwined. All England and some foreigners, and among them—the periscope does not lie—among them—arms entwined—Beechey and the leading man. The leading man, all limbered up, with Victory in his eye.

The royalties passed, but I did not see them. My knees had given way and I was sitting on the stone edge of the horse-trough—on and in it. The royalties passed, and those on the refuge, and I arose from the horse-trough—but, finding my coattails dripping, I turned to wring them in the granite bowl. Go see it some day, will you?—in Park Lane by the fountain. Go read upon it the inscription which met the eye of one who'd gone to London to be comforted with apples. Read it, and be glad—as I was—that we couldn't ever, ever get away from what I once had fled. For the inscription runs, the very *horse-trough* cries:

“NEW DAYS, NEW WAYS PASS BY. LOVE STAYS”

THE END

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